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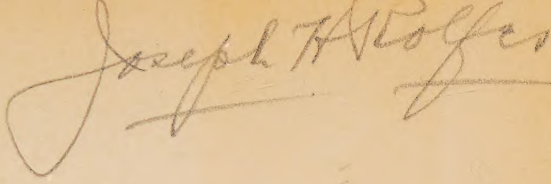

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE HOME

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE HOME

BY

REVEREND JAMES M. GILLIS

(OF THE PAULIST FATHERS)

EDITOR OF "THE CATHOLIC WORLD," AUTHOR OF "FALSE PROPHETS"

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TO
THE MEMORY OF
MY FATHER AND MOTHER

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THE REVOLT AGAINST MARRIAGE AND THE HOME

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE HOME

CHAPTER I

THE REVOLT AGAINST MARRIAGE AND THE HOME

THERE exists today, in all civilized countries, a considerable movement for the abolition of marriage and the disintegration of the family. Comfortable conservative folk may find such a statement incredible. They may admit indeed that the dignity or the sanctity of marriage is endangered, but not marriage itself. They cannot conceive that anyone, no matter how mad or how perverse, could urge that marriage as an institution should be thrown upon the scrapheap. Also they will concede that the *ideal perfection* of family life is to a degree impaired by the decay of parental authority and the insubordination of youth, but they cannot bring themselves even to contemplate the possibility of the extinction of the family. They argue, fairly enough, that the family is not an artificial creation, but a natural organism, coeval with man, and that it has survived revolutions and cataclysms innumerable. How, then, they demand to know, can it perish? As for divorce and race suicide and the general decline of sex morality, so obvious nowadays, these imperturbable optimists feel that these evils will be remedied somehow, sometime. If their attention be directed to the actually existent social unrest in various parts of the world, they

have a ready-made explanation of the unimportance of these phenomena. If warned of an impending social revolution, they resort to the bromide that soothed the nerves of most Europeans when threatened with a world war, "It is too terrible. It cannot be." If one insists upon thrusting brute facts in their face, the optimists repeat what a serene old Bishop—too serene for the good of his diocese—used to say to his clergy who tried to tell him of their problems and difficulties: "Go home, sir, and don't disturb my peace of mind." For these good people there are two bugaboos, the "agitator" and the "alarmist." An agitator is one who demands revolutionary change in the structure or the conduct of society. An alarmist is one who calls attention to the activities of the agitator. Our conservative friends consider the agitator a menace, and the alarmist a nuisance, and both of them equally unwelcome.

Another and very different group, who look with equanimity upon the prevailing social and moral disorder, is composed of those who solace themselves with the comfortable reflection, "Yes, yes, we live in an age of transition." To tell the truth, they rather welcome than deplore the present unsettlement of morals. They have a consoling philosophy, deriving remotely from Darwin and Spencer. According to that philosophy, society, like all other organisms, must undergo ceaseless evolution. Marriage and the family, in common with other social institutions, must continue to evolve or become fossilized. The process of evolution, they admit, is temporarily painful, but in the end the result will be beneficial. Therefore, consoled by science, they refuse to become excited over the present deplorable state of affairs in family life. They sit back, not indeed apathetically, but with at most a very restrained excitement, to witness the transformation of society. Nature, they say, knows what she is doing, and where she is tending. As for the human race, it will be carried along, willy nilly, on the stream of evolution. We do not know

—such is the theory—whether or not man has reached the last stage in his physical evolution. Still less can we be sure that any social institution has attained its ultimate form. All we know is that there is a law of progress that bids us "Nor sit nor stand but go"—*ohne hast ohne rast.* In the end, if there be an end, all will be well. Leave that to wise old Mother Nature.

There is yet another group who, although they too base their philosophy upon evolution, decline to be merely passive spectators of the cosmic process. They are the impatient ones who attempt to hurry nature. To them nature may be wise, but like others who are wise she is painfully slow. They consider evolution to be a leisurely, not to say lazy old dame. She takes aeons upon aeons to evolve a new species. She dawdles through centuries to bring about an insignificant social change. Where evolution is slow, revolution is quick. It accomplishes enormous results with one *coup,* in a day, or overnight, while the conservatives are asleep.

This evidently is the class in which are found the "agitators" and the "anarchists." But unlike the agitators and anarchists as conceived in the mind of "decent, respectable people," they are washed and clothed and (apparently) in their right minds. They hold forth not from the soap box on the street corner, but from the professor's chair, the editor's desk, the stage, the lecture platform. They control and they utilize the liberal and radical journals (some of them the smartest in the world). They are past masters of the modern art of publicity. It is one of their affectations to declaim against "the ignorant masses" (whom one of them has nicknamed with cruel cleverness the "booboisie"), but none the less they do not disdain to appeal to the masses. Bernard Shaw, for example, probably despises the sensational newspapers and the vulgar horde of semi-morons who read them, but he is not so thoroughly disdainful of the one or the other as to refuse

to write for those newspapers or to cast his pearls before those swine. It is no uncommon thing to see, in the screeching Sunday supplements, contributions by radicals who also write for very learned reviews. In these radicals the prophecy is fulfilled: "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

Meanwhile, well-meaning but blundering reformers are to a great extent wasting precious ammunition in the attack upon social evils of secondary importance, such as nakedness on the stage, orgiastic dancing in the night clubs, and the shameless dress of women on the street, in the ballroom, and even at home. The reformers would achieve more if they would divert their attention from dress and undress, cocktails and cigarettes, cabarets, roadhouses, "petting parties," and all such merely symptomatic phenomena, and concentrate their attack upon the intellectual and philosophic source of these evils. The chief harm to society is not done by the idle rich, not by the fast set; not by sexually precocious high school boys and girls, nor by "vampires" and "golddiggers." Not one of these is a radical evil. The *fons et origo* of every moral condition is never a fact or a thing, but always a philosophy. Back of every political revolution, and even more, every social revolution, is a philosophical theory. It may take the theory a long time to seep down into the consciousness of the common people, and still longer to emerge from consciousness to conduct. Darwin's scientific hypothesis of evolution, erected into a philosophy by Spencer, is nearly seventy years old, and Dayton, Tennessee, is just awaking to a realization of what it means. Let us hasten to add that we must not be too scornful of Dayton. Perhaps the wisest of us are none too sure of what a philosophy based on Darwinism will do to the world if it gets possession of the world.

However, though in general social changes take place slowly, even the most impetuous radical cannot reason-

ably complain that the modern world has been unduly dilatory about admitting a change in the status of marriage and the home. A real revolution has taken place in society, and in the most important social institution of all, the family, within the past generation or two. In a recent magazine article H. G. Wells speaks, with evident complacence, of the changes that have been wrought in the institution of marriage in his own lifetime, and, as he seems to suggest, largely at his instigation. "People ask," he says, "are you for or against marriage? Would you abolish it?" He replies: "We are all for and against marriage, and we abolish it piecemeal continually. . . . The marriage of today is not the marriage of yesterday, and still less is it likely to be the marriage of tomorrow. . . . The change in manners and morals in the last century has been tremendous." [1] Looking at that change from a different point of view, and with far different feelings, an American clergyman complains: "It took more than five hundred years for ancient pagan Rome to reach the degeneracy of the later republic in the matter of divorce. It took less than three hundred years for Christian America to reach the degeneracy which ranks us lower than any other nation in Christendom, and is scarcely exceeded by non-Christian Japan." [2]

So we seem to be getting on toward the ultimate dissolution of marriage, and the consequent abolition of the home. Not fast enough, however, to suit the "runaway radicals," as Mrs. C. P. S. Gilman (who imagines herself a moderate feminist) calls them. Bertrand Russell, in particular, is impatient and bitter because we change so slowly. He says: "The views of the average man on sexual ethics are those appropriate to the economic system existing in the time of his great-grandfather. Morality has varied as

[1] In Hearst's *International Cosmopolitan*, July, 1926, p. 33.
[2] Rev. Walter Gwynne, D.D., *Divorce in America Under State and Church* (N. Y., Macmillan, 1925), p. 139.

economic systems have varied, lagging always about three generations behind." [3]

If, however, we are behindhand in apprehending the new sex ethics, it is not because our education has been neglected. The discoveries made by the learned in these matters have been duly reported to the man in the street. Some fifteen or twenty years ago, one of the popular American magazines sent a reporter into the classrooms and libraries of various universities to collate what the professors were saying about sex ethics. The guileless reporter was shocked by what he discovered. The editor of the magazine also was scandalized, and so he proceeded to pass on the horrendous information to the public, fearing, and must we say hoping, that the public also would be shocked and scandalized, or at least that their imagination would be titilated. The exploit smelled badly of "yellow" journalism, yet the articles were not without significance. Their virtue (or their villainy, as you please) lay in the fact that they told tales out of school. They acquainted the "booboisie" with the opinions of the intelligentsia. There was, for example, a professor in the University of Chicago who explained to his pupils, boys and girls, that "Marriage is not a necessary preliminary to sex union. There are holier unions outside the marriage bond than within it." Another, at Wisconsin, while admitting that as a general rule monogamy is preferable to polygamy, taught that in some places, at certain times, in certain circumstances, polygamy is necessary and laudable. Still another director of the minds and conscience of youth, at Columbia, spoke rather pedantically: "It is not right to set up a technical, legal relationship or a circumstance of conventional morality as superior to the spontaneous preference of a man or woman who know that they love each other." Translating the learned

[3] "Styles in Ethics," in *Our Changing Morality. A Symposium* (N. Y., Albert and Charles Boni, 1924), p. 11.

doctor's academic phraseology into plain English, we are to understand, no doubt, that marriage is not always to be preferred to free love.

Obviously, there is nothing new in these professorial opinions except perhaps the language in which they are set forth. They might have been cribbed from St. Simon, or at least from St. Simonism as popularly interpreted and practiced by various free-love communities. The learned professors, indeed, though their theory may be supposed to be up to date, have really nothing to add to the teaching of the itinerant crusader Frances E. Wright, who traveled over these states preaching a free-love philosophy just about one hundred years ago. Also these "new" doctrines are to be had in Belford Bax, August Bebel, Frederick Engels, and a score of other outdated Marxian socialists.[4]

For those whose taste is literary rather than academic, the agitation for a lowering of the standards of sex morality has been carried on by novelists,—the prophets of the newest dispensation. "There is hardly a serious contemporary novel," says J. W. Krutch, dramatic editor of *The Nation*, "which does not take for granted things which would have outraged even liberal thinkers of the past century." Ah, but if they would only take these things for granted! Then they could leave them alone, or at least give them no more than a proper proportion of attention. Recently a New York dramatic critic, who seems to have suffered an attack of nausea after attending a long series of nasty plays, cried out that he was weary of stage prostitutes, and that he fairly hankered for a play about taxi-drivers or stevedores or longshoremen.

[4] Bebel: "The Sexual Act does not concern morality at all. It is simply a question of individual taste." For other examples, see *The Morality of Socialism*, by John J. Ming, S.J. (N. Y., Benziger Bros., 1908); *Socialism*, by Victor Cathrein, S.J., (N. Y., Benziger Bros., 1904); *Socialism, Menace or Promise, a Debate*, by Morris Hillquit and J. A. Ryan (N. Y., Macmillan, 1914).

One would imagine that readers of current fiction would some day get a similar spasm of righteous wrath, throw the latest sex story out the window (or, better still, through the window), and cry out for something different from the everlasting sex slop. Posterity, which will think worse of us than we think of the despised mid-Victorians,—and for a contrary reason—will probably judge from our novels that the twentieth century was concerned with sex, to the exclusion of business, sport, commerce, warfare, and all other interests. Even the war novels, like the war movies, if they survive, will carry the impression to our grandchildren that the World War of 1914-1918, like the Trojan war, was fought for the sake of "a girl and a 'feller."

This preoccupation with sex is characteristic of adolescence. With puberty comes curiosity; it teases and tortures youth, but as a young fellow grows through adolescence to maturity, his sex interest normally dies down. If he arrives at middle age still morbidly sex-conscious, he is considered a pathological case. If he never discovers any other interest or any other problems than those of sex, he may end literally in a lunatic asylum. But the readers of current novels seem never to get beyond the stage of adolescence that craves ever more and more satisfaction for a sickly curiosity.

But who *are* the readers of all this "sex stuff"? Mr. H. L. Mencken claims to know: "It is women, not men, who are doing all the current gabbling about sex, and proposing all the new-fangled modifications of the rules and regulations ordained by God. It is hard to find a reflective woman in these days who is not harboring some new and startling scheme for curing the evils of monogamous marriage; it is impossible to find any woman who has not given ear to such schemes. Women, not men, read the endless books upon the subject that now rise mountain high in all the book stores, and women, not

men, discuss and re-discuss the notions in them." A rather disconcerting judgment from one who poses as a champion of the fair sex, and has written a volume *In Defense of Women*. His opinion, however, is corroborated in an article on "Liberalism in the Colleges," by Paul Blanshard, in *The Nation*, who says: "Whether you go to Vassar or Wellesley, or Mills College, California, you will find many of the most influential girls questioning, attacking, ridiculing the conventional standards in industry, politics, and the home." [5]

On a par with the article on the opinions of university professors referred to above, and somewhat more deserving of attention than the sex novels, is a volume entitled *Our Changing Morality*. It is a symposium in which the editor has assembled the opinions of sixteen radicals. It reads like an anthology of moral anarchy. Its contents are incredibly vicious and silly, and yet it can hardly be said to contain merely the unsupported opinion of a group of scatter-brained enthusiasts. There are huge facts in modern society that need explaining—for example, the divorce evil in the United States; the destruction of the family and of domestic virtue in Russia; the ominous decline of the birth rate in France, England, in Germany, and indeed throughout the civilized world. These monstrously important phenomena cry aloud for an explanation. Seeking the explanation, we can hardly afford to ignore the evidences of sex unrest found in *Our Changing Morality*. If these writers be accused of insanity, doubtless they will reply like the man in the asylum. "The difference between us and the rest of the world is that we speak out what is in our minds." The universal prevalence of the "social evil," the phenomenal increase of divorce, not only in America, but in a dozen other countries, the rapid spread of race suicide, and in fine, the ubiquitous degeneracy of morals, all seem to show that a

[5] September 17, 1924.

rather large part of the world tacitly agrees with the madmen.

It must be evident, even from this hasty sketch of the prevailing moral chaos, that if society is to save itself from destruction, it must act quickly and powerfully. It will not do to brood over chaos. The creative word must be uttered that will produce cosmos. But what can society do? Can it do anything? The question cannot be answered until another be asked and answered: What *is* society? Is it a purely political organism, independent of or divorced from all existing moral and spiritual forces? Or is society a combination of the political, intellectual, moral, and spiritual forces working in harmony for the common weal? It must be confessed that such a definition applies to Utopia rather than to any existing state. But doubtless we shall all agree that such is the ideal and that by striving toward the ideal we may get ourselves out of difficulties which are only too real. Presumably, then, society should look first to the intellectual forces, notably the universities, established with the state's sanction and in many cases sustained by the state's funds. But it must be evident, not only to those who read miscellaneous statements of college professors—statements carefully collated for the purpose of shocking the innocent reader—but also to those who are intimately acquainted with the teaching of the universities, that these institutions, which society has established as stabilizing influences, are in reality a disintegrating force. The professors themselves would be the first to scout the idea that a university is meant to be a stabilizing influence. Its purpose, they say, is quite the contrary; to unsettle the mind rather than to settle it; to foster intellectual independence rather than subservience to any intellectual authority whatsoever. The university abhors nothing more than unanimity. Not long ago, the President of Harvard University wrote to Bertrand Russell protesting that at Harvard there was

"absolute academic freedom." An identical claim is made for virtually all the prominent institutions of learning. The only exceptions are those that are under strict ecclesiastical discipline, and these are despised by the "great" colleges. Now, absolute academic freedom involves the right of the professor to teach whatever seems to him to be true, irrespective of any external standard or authority. This, evidently, is extreme individualism, and how can such individualism make for coherence? And if there be no coherence, how shall society escape disintegration?

However, not to enter into a detailed proof of the statement that university education, at least in this "age of transition," is destructive rather than constructive, eccentric rather than concentric, centrifugal rather than centripetal, let it suffice to say that educators, in general, disown the idea that they are directly responsible for the preservation of society. Their purpose, they say, is to "hew to the line, let the chips fall where they may," to teach the truth,—what they take to be the truth,—though the heavens fall. If the truth, as they see it, is damaging to established civilization, or to traditional morality, so much the worse, they say, for these aged and decrepit institutions. Existing social institutions, therefore, such as marriage, the family, the home, will not be saved by "modern education." Wells is fond of the phrase "education or catastrophe." It seems not to occur to him that education, —as conducted nowadays—may *be* catastrophe.

On the other hand, society can expect no help and no sympathy from the radicals, for, in spite of their occasional affectation of zeal for the welfare of the race, they are essentially individualists, or even solipsists. "Sex experiences," says Isabel Leavenworth,[6] a teacher at Barnard College for women, in New York, "can be judged only on the basis of the part which they play in the

[6] In *Our Changing Morality*, p. 101.

creative drama of the individual soul. There are as many possibilities for successful sex life as there are men and women in the world." "All sexual intercourse," says Bertrand Russell,[7] "should spring from the free impulse of both parties and nothing else." It must be evident to anyone who reads these and similar erratic utterances that the radicals demand not only that the Church but also the State shall stand aside and keep its hands off, while social customs, such as marriage and the family, are undergoing evolution, or, more likely, revolution. They would let society go to perdition rather than save it by the voluntary surrender of one iota of their liberty. True, there are exceptions. H. G. Wells is wont to demand that citizens shall surrender not only their liberties but their children to the State. But in this he is in conflict with the majority of his coagitators. Indeed, he is frequently in conflict with his own principles. To the radicals in general, any surrender of liberty is a sin and a crime. "Self-denial," said Mrs. Gilman, "or even the sublimation of sex, is a foolish idea." [8] "We have been taught," said J. D. Kerfoot, in an enthusiastic review of Ellen Key's *Love and Marriage*, "that when the flesh conquers the spirit it is a sin. It is time to ask if it be not a sin when the spirit conquers the flesh." Edwin Muir [9] complains that "the whole world is in the grip of a psychological incapacity to escape from the idea of obligation." This will be a surprise to those who think the chief characteristic of our age to be the absence of a sense of obligation. Indeed, with the rise of Freudianism and the reaction against puritanism, there is an equal demand for the release of inhibitions, —restraints from within,—and a removal of all prohibitions,—restraints from without. Obviously, this is moral

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 65.
[9] Formerly editor of *The New Age* (London), and now dramatic critic for the *Scotsman* and the *Athenaeum*, *ibid.*, p. 82.

anarchy, and moral anarchy can hardly effect social salvation.

There remains one possible helpmeet for society, the Church, the organized moral and spiritual force, the society wherein the ideal and the real meet and embrace. But to mention the Church as a coadjutor of the State, in these days, is to invite immediate and unqualified opposition. At least in the United States of America it is counted almost treasonable to suggest that State and Church coöperate, not to say unite. Yet it was not always thus, even in America. In the days of the Pilgrim fathers and the Virginia cavaliers, and for a hundred years, indeed long after the adoption of the Federal Constitution, in spite of its prohibition of the union of Church and State, the Protestant churches in the various States were to all intents and purposes united. As for Europe, no one need be told that such statesmen as Napoleon Bonaparte, Justinian, Theodosius, Charlemagne, considered the success of the State impossible apart from an alliance with the Church. But *nous avons changé tout cela.* The separation was inevitable, and it has become a primary political dogma in most countries that the two shall never unite again. We shall not lament for the sake of the Church. She paid only too dear for the privilege of assisting the State. But let this be understood, the State will suffer more than the Church by the separation. The Church is a complete society and can exist, as she has demonstrated, without the aid, or even with the opposition, of the State. Whether the State can continue to exist without the Church is another matter. Indeed the State has never yet really ventured to dissociate herself entirely from the Church. Even where the two are legally separated, the State frequently calls upon and leans on the Church. It would be preposterous to deny that the State asks and obtains moral help from the Church. Of all governments now existing, only Russia and Mexico are trying the

experiment of deliberately scouting the Church and rejecting her help. But only the most resolutely optimistic radical can profess to be proud of the results either in Russia or in Mexico. Wiser governments encourage an *entente cordiale,* if not an alliance, between Church and State. When a crisis arises, the State invariably cries out to the Church, "Save us, we perish." Even for such an unspiritual project as the prosecution of a war, the State asks help from the Church. "Morale will win the war, and you, the Church, must help produce morale!" was a familiar slogan not long ago.

When the crisis is more purely moral, the assistance of the Church is even more imperative. We have arrived at such a crisis. Society is in serious danger from the breakdown of domestic morality. We are face to face with the crucial problem of how to safeguard marriage. The family must be perpetuated or civilization is doomed. It will therefore be helpful for those who are sincerely concerned about the continuance of our civilization to see what the most important of all moral and spiritual forces, the Catholic Church, has to offer for the salvation of society. Our civilization, indeed, is not all that it might be. With certain features of it the Church is justly impatient. But such as it is, civilization is better than anarchy. It is worth saving.

THE NEED OF A STANDARD OF DOMESTIC MORALITY

CHAPTER II

THE NEED OF A STANDARD OF DOMESTIC MORALITY

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, in one of his famous prefaces (those supreme examples of the tail wagging the dog), exclaims, with a finely simulated indignation: "There is no subject in which more dangerous nonsense is talked and thought than marriage. If the mischief stopped at talking and thinking, it would be bad enough, but it goes further into disastrous anarchical action." [1] Reading that moral outburst, one might hope that Shaw would refrain from adding to the dangerous nonsense, but close on the heels of his pious pronouncement he makes more disastrous anarchical suggestions than any half dozen of his radical competitors. And, as always, he argues flippantly. "What can they know of England that only England know?" he quotes from Kipling, and paraphrases, "What can they know of marriage who only monogamy know?" He knows a lady who has been married five times, a "wise, attractive, interesting woman," and he avers that she who has "married and managed five husbands must be much more expert at it than most monogamic ladies." [2] He laughs at those who are "so domestic that they never loved anyone but their own husbands and wives." He jokes also about "the feeling that a husband or wife is an article of property greatly depreciated at secondhand." To anyone who realizes the present dismal and desperate condition of domestic moral-

[1] *The Doctor's Dilemma, Getting Married, etc.* (N. Y., Brentano's, 1911), p. 119.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167.

ity, Shaw's fun-making is,—to borrow a phrase from Mr. Chesterton,—like "the gaiety of a gravedigger in a city swept by a pestilence." To orthodox Christians Shaw's persiflage is not only dangerous nonsense, but something akin to sacrilege.

He professes, furthermore, to be perplexed as to what is meant by the word "marriage." "What do you mean?" he asks, "civil marriage, sacramental marriage, Roman Catholic marriage, Turkish marriage, South Dakota marriage?" He has not, of course, ventured to complete the catalogue. He might have added the Martin Luther marriage, "an external, worldly thing, no more sacred than clothes and food"; the John Calvin marriage, no sacrament, but "an ordinance of God, like agriculture, architecture, shoemaking and haircutting"; or the John Milton marriage, soluble at the request of the two parties or of either one of them. Continuing the list still further, we come upon the Lord and Lady Hamilton-Lord Nelson marriage, a revival of polyandry, a household of three; the George Eliot marriage, without benefit of clergy; the Sarah Bernhardt marriage, according to the Nietzschean doctrine of *Herrenmoral*. There is, in our own day, the Ellen Key "marriage outside marriage," the Soviet marriage, with or without ceremony, registered or unregistered, but in neither case binding; the Judge Lindsey or "companionate" marriage, a euphemism for trial marriage; the Anna Howard Shaw marriage, in which the bride and groom dictate the terms of the contract, and the minister accommodates the ritual to their tastes. There is the Lucy Stone marriage, in which the woman retains her own name; the Edward Carpenter marriage, in which the bride promises to honor and obey but not to love; the revised Anglican marriage, in which she promises to love and honor but not obey. There is not only the South Dakota marriage (Mr. Shaw probably got his States mixed; he means the Nevada marriage), but what we must call, to our

shame, the American marriage, equivalent to successive polygamy; the Japanese marriage, in which the bond is more fragile than that of the American marriage; the Swedish marriage, soluble upon request; the Yucatan marriage, dissolved upon payment of twenty-five dollars. And so on and so on. There is only one adjective to express the situation—it is chaotic. Need we say that the situation is too tragically serious to be remedied by Shavian persiflage? It is even beyond the power of legislation. Legislation is a salve applied to the body politic, but if the blood is bad and the heart diseased, society needs a more radical remedy than ointments.

To repeat a principle recorded in the introductory chapter, every social condition good or bad arises out of a philosophy. To save society we must discover a sound philosophy; or if we have had it and lost it we must revert to it. It is necessary, therefore, to consider briefly the prevailing ethical theories of the day as a preliminary to any profitable discussion of marriage, divorce, and social evils in general.

One familiar modern ethical theory is that morality is nothing more than conformity with custom. Almost every modern moralist reminds us (for fear we may have forgotten our Latin) that "morality" comes from *mores*, and that *mores* means customs. Apparently we are to be rescued from our predicament by etymology. *Mores* means customs. Therefore, whatever is customary is moral. A good man is one who conforms to the prevailing standard. A good marriage is one in harmony with the times and the place, and the rule works both ways: if those whose marriage is in harmony with the customs of the day are moral, then those whose marriage is that of the days of their grandfathers are, presumably, immoral. One must not be ahead of the times, and one must not lag behind the times. Of the two sins, the latter is, of course, the more grievous. Indeed, those who

are ahead of the times are exculpated, for they are pioneers, pathmakers in the wilderness, and therefore benefactors of society; while those who are behind the times are stragglers, who delay the march of the army of progress. These are precious principles, no doubt, and dear to the hearts of advanced thinkers. But they may act like a boomerang. Sometimes pathmakers lose their way in the woods, go around in circles, and bring up in the rear even of the stragglers. Of this more presently.

The theory of morality as *mores* creates more problems than it solves. For example, Mr. Arthur Garfield Hays, a New York lawyer, ridiculing our divorce laws, but apparently unconscious of the fact that he is at the same time puncturing the *mores* theory, presents a case: Suppose, he says, a divorce is granted to a man in Utah, but is not recognized in New York. If the man remarries in Utah, he is moral, but if he remarries in New York, he is a bigamist. If his divorced wife remarries, she also is moral or immoral according to the place of her residence. Mr. Hays is welcome to his little joke at the expense of our anomalous divorce legislation. We quite agree with him; it is ridiculous,—and worse. But let us see what happens to the ethical theory that *mores* makes morality. In the case supposed, or in any case, we must ask, which *mores* makes morality, the *mores* of Utah or of New York? Or to broaden the field, those of the United States, where divorce is rampant, or of our neighbor Canada, where divorce, until recently, was virtually nonexistent? When a man crosses the boundary line, must he change his *mores*, as the King of England changes his trousers for kilts, and the Church for the Kirk when he goes to Scotland? If a Frenchman migrates to Morocco, may he take four wives? If a white man settles in Senegambia, may he, indeed must he, to be moral, adopt Senegambian *mores?* Are there black *mores* in Africa, white *mores* in Europe, "Red" *mores* in Russia? If a

man from the temperate zone settles in the tropics, is he entitled to assume tropical *mores?* Are the crimes of Clapham really chaste in Martaban?

The truth is, of course, that crime is crime in Martaban as well as in Clapham. The inhabitants of Martaban may not recognize that a certain action is criminal, but the action remains objectively a crime nevertheless. The definition of crime does not wait upon the customs of savages. If the inchoate or degenerate conscience of savages, or the perverted conscience of civilized people, prevents their apprehending the moral law, the law remains none the less. Polygamy is wrong even in Turkey. Infanticide is wrong even in China. Pederasty was wrong even in ancient Athens. The theory of elastic, geographical morality is a manifest absurdity.

But there is another difficulty. One who accepts the *mores* as the basis of ethics would seem logically bound to deny himself the right to complain about any existing moral evil, at least if it be fairly widespread and tolerated. One of the best known exponents of the theory, the late William Graham Sumner, for many years professor of Social Sciences at Yale, in the midst of a discussion of social and moral conditions in the middle ages, denounced what he called the medieval custom of municipal management of houses of prostitution. But if *mores* make morality, prostitution must be always and everywhere moral, so, on that theory, what ground can there be for complaint?

The fact is that local and temporary customs are frequently, perhaps habitually, in contradiction to morality. The prophets, the moralists, and *par excellence* Christ, denounced many moral customs prevailing in their days. One who is to improve the race must sometimes differ from the race. Acquiescence is stagnation; standardization makes for mediocrity if not inferiority. Universal conformity spells universal paralysis.

Reacting against the *mores* theory, some philosophers go to the other extreme. The Müller-Lyer philosophy, for example, according to Bertrand Russell, its sponsor in the English-speaking world, teaches that the social history of civilization is divided into three periods, the clan period, the family period, and the personal period. We are now entering, he says, the personal period. But the reason of our moral unrest is that "Christian sexual ethics" (the code under which we live) belong to the middle family period. The personal period has not yet been embodied in the laws of most Christian countries." In the personal period, that is to say, now, "Relations between adults who are free agents are a private matter, and should not be interfered with by law or by public opinion, because no outsider can know whether they are good or bad. . . . The ideal to be aimed at is that all sexual intercourse should spring from the free impulse of both parties, based upon mutual inclination and nothing else. . . . The cramping of love by institutions is one of the major evils of the world. Every person who allows himself to think that an adulterer must be wicked adds his stone to the prison in which the source of poetry and beauty and life is incarcerated by 'priests in black gowns.'" [3]

Unfortunately, this interesting theory seems to take no account of an obvious fallacy. It assumes that the "personal" period, coming latest in history, is necessarily the best, and hence a true and valuable evolution. Like all overconfident believers in evolution as a solution of the riddles of existence, Mr. Russell seems to ignore the possibility of racial retrogression. Yet to the historian, if not to the biologist, the fact of retrogression is better authenticated than that of evolution. There are more evidences of decadence than of progress scattered over this globe. The evidences of degeneracy are before our eyes and under our feet. The evidences of evolution are largely

[3] "Styles in Ethics," in *Our Changing Morality*, p. 7ff.

locked up in the rocks. We can *see* races in moral decay, but as for biological evolution, most of us have to take it on faith, if we take it at all.

Evolutionists are fond of attempting to reconstruct the mental and moral conditions of prehistoric man. But these reconstructions remain largely imaginative. We may better confine ourselves to historic man. Not imagination, but authentic history, tells us of the fate of Thebes, of Babylon and Nineveh, Sidon and Tyre, Alexandria and Byzantium. We see the fellahin in Egypt, the land of Tutankhamen and Cleopatra, scarcely more advanced than the Tierra del Fuegans. The modern Egyptians are building no pyramids. They don't even guess at the riddle of the Sphinx. They don't know there *is* a riddle. Not to labor the point and not to multiply instances, the fact looms large in history that man can and does decay. Even where we see an advance in civilization, we have no assurance that progress in one direction may not be simultaneous with decadence in another. Mechanical progress for example may coincide with cultural decay. Bishop John Lancaster Spalding has noted this fact quite eloquently. "This," he says, "is the history of culture amongst all people. We know from Aristophanes what was the moral condition of the age of Pericles; and he ascribes the frightful degeneracy from the standard of conduct which made the men who fought and won at Marathon to what he most aptly calls the 'new education,' or in the language of our time, modern culture. The same story is repeated in Rome. Virtue and public spirit flourished in the midst of poverty and rustic manners; but when conquered Greece with the silken cords of culture led her captors captive, together with letters and refinement, every kind of corruption was introduced into the State; and the Latin classics almost universally attribute the ruin of their country to this cause. Sallust considers a taste for painting as a vice no less than

drunkenness; and Horace abounds in praise of the rigid virtue and simple ways of the fathers. And in modern times the age of Leo X was an era of moral degeneracy, and that of Louis XIV was immediately followed by the most humiliating and disgraceful epoch in French history; while in England, culture, as represented by the court of Charles II, fostered the most loathsome and hideous sensuality. Germany's culture period, too, is one of moral paralysis, and it is not surprising that it should have created the philosophy of hate and despair as taught by Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann. Goethe himself may inspire admiration and enthusiasm, but not perfect respect." [4]

One need hardly be at pains to draw the conclusion, but Mr. Russell seems to have missed it. The latest ethical theory is not necessarily the best. It may be the worst. What is taken for a genuine evolution may be a phenomenon of degeneracy. There used to be a theory that primitive man lived normally in a state of sexual promiscuity. The theory was demolished by the prodigious erudition of Westermarck, but even Westermarck admits that there may have been, and that there still may be, certain degenerate tribes that practice promiscuity. If Mr. Russell's ethical system were followed by the race, society would be once again on the slippery chute toward promiscuity. In that case, we should revert, not indeed to the condition of primitive man, but to that of the degenerate primitive. For what else could result from a universal acceptance of Mr. Russell's dictum: "Sexual relations are a private matter, not to be interfered with either by law or public opinion"? Fortunately, the native instinct, even of the aborigines, makes them shrink from any such principle as that. It certainly is odd that a

[4] *Things of the Mind*, pp. 186-187. For another and more recent amplification of this familiar idea, see "The Outlook for American Culture," by Aldous Huxley, in *Harper's Magazine*, August, 1927.

civilized man should advocate a moral code that would be beneath that of a savage—and this in the name of progress.

The Müller-Lyer theory smacks faintly of science, but I fear that Mr. Russell would find it difficult to defend it scientifically. It would be hard to show, for instance, that the clan came first and the family second, or that the "personal" theory comes after rather than before the family period. As a matter of fact, the assertion of a right to personal liberty in morals is nothing modern, nothing new, and it has nothing to do with modern science. "I doubt," says Dr. Erwin Edman, a pronounced modernist, "whether anyone who has ever traveled or read Locke or Hume, or the daily newspapers, would find anything new in what Bertrand Russell has to say about styles in ethics." Indeed, the theory is borrowed almost bodily from Karl Marx. In Marx's opinion, moral conditions are the reflex of economic conditions. And Müller-Lyer, says Russell, "shows that sexual family ethics have at all times been dominated by economic conditions; hunting, pastoral, agricultural and industrial tribes or nations have each their own special kinds of institutions. Economic causes determine whether a tribe will practice polygamy, polyandry, group marriage, or monogamy." This has the old familiar sound. For how many years have we not been hearing that the code of Abraham is not fitted for the day of Moses, nor the code of Moses for the day of Christ, nor the code of Christ for our own times? There is, we are told, a suitable morality for Bedouins who roam the desert, and another for those who live in cities; there is a morality proper to peasants, who till the field, and another for mill workers; one for a purely agricultural society, and another for an industrial civilization. The possible ramifications of the theory are endless. Marx did not see them all, but his disciples added to the list, until Nietzsche came along

with his *reductio ad absurdum* of *Herrenmoral,* and *Sklavenmoral,* one moral code for aristocrats and one for the common herd.

I have said this theory is not new. As a matter of fact, it is common property amongst radicals, and it is bandied about freely by feminists. Perhaps these latter learned it from Ellen Key, who says: "The new moraltiy [she also is deluded with the idea of its novelty] no longer accepts commandments from the Mounts of Sinai and Galilee. Here, as everywhere else, evolution can only regard continuous experience as revelation." [5] Indeed, the new morality accepts no commandments from any extrinsic source. Even Immanuel Kant, who was so awed at the presence of a moral law in man, so impressed with the categorical imperative, the "thou Shalt" and "thou Shalt Not" inherent in man's consciousness, nevertheless insisted that this absolute, universal, and categorical law comes not from without, not from above, but from within. Man is autonomous, a law unto himself. According to Kant, moral autonomy is so necessary that if a man were to lead a good life out of obedience to God his conduct would be heteronomous, unworthy of the name "moral." [6] To accept, therefore, the moral law from Sinai or from Galilee would be immoral!

Practically all ethical systems, outside of orthodox Christianity, are modifications of one of these three that we have named: the *mores* theory, a favorite with evolutionists; the personal theory, as explained by Bertrand Russell, a flimsily scientific justification for doing whatever passion commands; and Kant's theory of man's moral autonomy, which means essentially that man must be a law unto himself. We Christians are convinced that all

[5] *Love and Marriage* (N. Y., G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911), p. 52.
[6] "All arbitrary heteronomy, far from having any binding force, is contrary to the principle of the morality of the will" (*Kritik der Praktische Vernunft,* quoted in Donat, *The Freedom of Science,* p. 37).

these systems lead to moral anarchy. There must be and there is a standard of morality outside of and independent of human moods and passions. Right and wrong are objective and eternal. There are no styles in ethics, though there are doubtless styles in morals. There must be no sliding scale of morality. Furthermore, there are no moral concessions to genius, no dispensations for supermen. Right is right and wrong is wrong eternally. If, through no fault of his own, a man fails to apprehend the right, if in ignorance he does wrong, thinking it right, he does not sin, but right and wrong remain unaffected by his ignorance. Just as we refuse to accept that type of philosophic idealism which declares a thing does not exist until it is discovered, that Australia, for example, was not there until some primitive man happened upon it in his seagoing canoe, or that a star, invisible to the eye, did not exist until the telescope was invented; so we refuse to believe that right and wrong are nonexistent until man recognizes them, or that they vary and become interchangeable, right turning into wrong and wrong into right, if man's conscience is crooked or his intelligence dim. It is not right and wrong, but man that changes.

I have called this the conviction of orthodox Christians, but it is also the doctrine of the noblest and greatest of pagan philosophers. Plato believed in the Absolute Good which both he and we call God. Aristotle, without the aid of Divine revelation, working with reason alone, developed an ethical system that is essentially Christian. The Stoics, particularly Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius (and now we have called the greatest names in the history of pagan philosophy), were all convinced that the eternal moral law is written dimly or brightly on the human heart, and that it comes to man from an outside Source of all Good, which remains forever immutable.

In a word, Christians and the wiser pagans combine against the anarchy of a shifting standard of good and

bad. Therein is sufficient proof that natural human reason, even without any supernatural revelation, recognizes that if there be no fixed standard there can be no true morality. A shifting standard is no standard at all, either at the bureau of weights and measures or in the school of ethics. One would imagine that all evolutionists would accept these platitudes. For evolution means progress, and how can there be progress if there be no fixed standard? If there be no landmark, how shall we know whether we are coming or going? An ethical system without established moral principles is a ship without a compass, on a sea without sun, moon, or stars.

Furthermore, if there is to be any improvement in the moral condition of the race, or any part of the race, it will never be achieved by moralists whose primary tenet is that what is good today may be bad tomorrow, that what was moral in ancient or medieval times is immoral in our days, that what was sin in our grandfathers' time is virtue for us. With such principles as these one may perhaps make progress, but it will be progress in a circle. We may at any given moment be behind where we were a generation or a century or an aeon ago. No doubt we flatter ourselves with the thought that we are morally in advance of all bygone ages, but if there be no fixed standard of good or evil, how can we even compare ourselves to the bygone ages? If "good" is not fixed, and "bad" is not fixed, then it is folly to talk of "better" and "worse." So, in the end, if you ask the materialist-evolutionist how he knows that the race is going forward and not backward, he must answer, if he speak true, that he makes an act of faith in progress. But what has such as he to do with an act of faith?

The pagans, who were convinced of an immutable moral law, had no Bible to teach them, no revelation from Sinai or Galilee, or from any other holy mount. But Christians have the added assurance of Divine revelation

to confirm the moral law written on the human heart. We have, moreover, the Incarnate Revelation, Jesus Christ. We hold Him to be the Ultimate Morai Standard in Person. We quote, indeed, Socrates and Plato, and Aristotle, and the rest, but first and last, we have recourse to the infallible Christ. His judgment in matters of morals is final. If our *mores* agree with His principles they are good; otherwise, they are bad. We are not a law unto ourselves. He is our Law.

THE SACREDNESS OF MARRIAGE

CHAPTER III

THE SACREDNESS OF MARRIAGE

"THE Roman Catholic Church has on many occasions, through its theologians, affirmed its belief that sensual love is a guilty thing and, using its own kind of logic, has exhorted man to multiply and replenish the earth." "The early Church looked upon marriage as a regrettable but necessary concession to man's fallen nature, a palliative for an hereditary disease." The first of these statements is from the pen of Edwin Muir, the second from J. B. Kerfoot, an American reviewer of Ellen Key's *Love and Marriage*. Repetitions of the idea may be found *ad libitum* in the writings of those who have made a superficial study of the Catholic attitude, or who, having made no study at all, rely upon hearsay for their knowledge of Catholic doctrine. Mr. Muir was apparently more concerned with turning a smart phrase than with getting at the truth. Otherwise he would have been chary of accusing the Church of a glaring contradiction, for the Catholic Church,—whatever may be thought her shortcomings,—is not given to sheer asininity. Paradoxes there are, no doubt, in her theology, but not bald contradictions. Her doctrine concerning love and marriage is, however, not even paradoxical. It is very simple. It may be stated briefly thus: sensual love, in the sense of merely carnal passion, is proper to beasts. As such it is unworthy of man, for man, by virtue of his soul, is primarily a spiritual being, having kinship with the angels. He is a child of God. Anything, therefore, that is beastly is a degradation in him; having divine dignity, he must live

up to it;—*noblesse oblige.* It is, therefore, animal lust in man, not human love, that the Church calls guilty. Many novelists and playwrights confuse the two, but the Church, in her theology and her ethics, carefully avoids the confusion.

When love is not merely carnal, but spiritual, or even when it is, like man himself, partly spiritual and partly sensual, that is to say human; it is not only no sin but a sacred thing. This brings us rather quickly to high ground, and I doubt if Mr. Muir and Mr. Kerfoot follow us. We have gotten out of their element. Even our vocabulary must seem strange to them, for to the typical evolutionist, who is generally also a materialist, "soul" is an archaic word, "spiritual love" is a fiction, "angels" have no more objective existence than leprechauns, "child of God" is a mystical delusion. As Haeckel says, "Man who exalted himself to be the Son of God is found to be only a placental mammal." Therefore, of course, for such as these it is absurd to speak of love as holy. Aldous Huxley (who comes by his materialism naturally) "is in search of love," says a literary critic, but "he can find only ridiculous and obscene biological facts, for love, like God and the other most important human possessions, does not exist." [1] Precisely! God is love, and if there be no God there is no love, human or divine; there is only animal attraction. And when you take the spiritual and religious element out of love it becomes repulsive.

But the Church denies that love is either obscene or absurd: "See that thou call no creature of God unclean." Believing as she does in the soul and the inseparability in this life of the soul and body, she holds that love and the bodily consummation of love are not unworthy of her blessing. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do," says St. Paul, "do all to the honor and glory of God." There can be no doubt in the mind of those

[1] J. W. Krutch, in *The Nation*, June 25, 1924.

acquainted with the great Apostle's thought that the phrase "whatever else" does not exclude the marital act. The process of procreation is not ignoble. How can that be ignoble by which man and woman are made coadjutors with God in the production of human life? The truth, then, is that the Church, far from considering conjugal love, partly sensual though it be, as something guilty, holds it a sacrament and groups it with Holy Communion, Baptism, Holy Orders, and the other external signs of interior grace.

This explanation and protestation does not ordinarily placate the critics of the Church. It only causes them, as usual, to shift their ground and change their accusation. Having accused the Church of thinking too meanly of love, now they allege that she exalts love overmuch. Specifically they declare that religion is nothing but eroticism sublimated. They are unable to appreciate the truth because "the carnal man savoreth not the things that are of the spirit." As religion is beyond the ken of those who reject God, so love is beyond the ken of those who deny the soul. If man be only an animal, no matter how highly developed, there can be nothing spiritual in his love, and therefore to associate it with worship of God is a matter for mockery. But the Church is not afraid to speak of human love in the same breath with divine love. The concept of marriage as a sacrament representing, as St. Paul says, the union of Christ and the Church, is to carnal men nothing but mystical moonshine. Professing themselves zealous champions of the dignity of the human race, they attempt the folly of elevating the race by denying that man is man. To the question "What is man more than a beast?" they reply that he is nothing more than a placental mammal. If that be true, then his sexual experiences are indeed ridiculous and obscene.

While the novelists are drawing these melancholy conclusions from the science of their fathers, the Church

continues undismayed to preach her gospel that love is a heavenly thing and marriage a mystical experience. Her doctrine is derived primarily from the significant phrase of our Savior, "What God hath joined together." There were in His day Essenes, a fanatical sect who taught that marriage was a sin invented by the Devil. Probably some of these proto-Puritans were in the groups that hovered about Jesus to hear Him. It must have scandalized them to hear Him say that God is the author of marriage. Like the Gnostics and Manichees and Albigenses of later generations (it is curious how heresy runs to perversity), they despised, or professed to despise, the body and to condemn its works. Here, perhaps, is one of the causes of the perplexity of such persons as Mr. Muir and Mr. Kerfoot. Can it be that they know no difference between heretics and Catholics, as they seem to know no distinction between carnal and spiritual love? Of course, there have been from time to time moralists even among the orthodox who have borrowed overvigorous phrases from the vocabulary of heresy to condemn disorderly love. It would hardly be fair, however, to take their denunciations *au pied de la lettre*. David, the psalmist, in a moment of irritation, blurted out, "All men are liars"; but he adds, "I said it in my wrath." So it would be only a trick to quote the Bible as authority for the statement that all men are liars. Likewise, it is only a trick of controversy to declare that the Catholic Church, through her theologians, teaches that sexual love is a guilty thing.[2] Only

[2] It should be remembered also that most of the diatribes against sexual love, and against woman, were delivered by monks, who, as Fr. Bede Jarrett says, "Were writing for a monastic order and were quite naturally concerned chiefly with the relations of monks and women, so that since chastity and virginity were essential to religious [*i.e.*, monastic] life it was woman as a danger to their vocation who was most frequently described. It would be grossly unscientific," he adds, "to take these monastic treatises as representative of medieval thought on womankind" (*Social Theories of the Middle Ages*, Boston, Little, Brown & Company, 1926, p. 69).

a tyro in theology, or a trickster in controversy, would attempt to make the Church responsible for all the rhetoric of her preachers, or all the exaggerations of her moralists. The important fact remains that no one can believe or teach that marriage or love is essentially unholy, and remain a Catholic.

Interpreting, and slightly amplifying, the brief remark of Jesus, "Whom God hath joined," St. Paul declares not only that marriage is "honorable," but is "a great sacrament."[3] One scholar of unquestionable ability and of no "Roman" Catholic predilections, Rev. T. A. Lacey, a clergyman of the Established Church in England, calls the phrase (great sacrament) a "gnomic utterance," but proceeds to explain that "It recalls the familiar distinction of Hellenic mysteries into μέγαλα and μικρά and it is difficult to believe that St. Paul had not this in mind. It will then follow that marriage, no less than the Incarnation, is to rank among the greater mysteries of the Christian faith. . . . It is no forcing of His words when we take them to speak of marriage as mystery, not merely in some wide and general sense, but in the special sense of a sacrament, which is a vehicle of Divine grace."[4]

Commencing with those two sententious utterances, one from Christ Himself, and one from His great Apostle, Christian tradition developed a concept of marriage infinitely more dignified than any that the pagan or even the Jewish civilization had produced. The Church borrowed, doubtless, a good part of her matrimonial ritual from the pagan Romans, as she borrowed some of the features of the pagan *pompa* for the celebration of her Mysteries,[5] but Christian marriage itself was a new creation, as indeed

[3] Eph. v. 32.

[4] *Marriage in Church and State* (London, Robert Scott, 1912), p. 43.

[5] *Cf.*, Duchesne, *Origines du Culte Chrétien*, p. 419; tr. *Christian Worship, Its Origin and Evolution* (London, S.P.C.K., 1903), pp. 433, 434.

the Christian concept of love was a new revelation. The Christian gospel of love recognizes no essential distinction between human and Divine love. Pure love, the love of man for God, or of man for his fellowman, or the holy love of man for woman, are all basically the same. When St. Bernard, most austere and ascetic of men, preached to his monks on the love of God, he found no better text than the Song of Songs, the most fervent, and perhaps the most orientally exuberant love poem ever written. He expounds that poem, word for word, applying it to the mystic love of man for God. Vicious and low-minded persons who hunt pornography even in the sacred Scriptures will doubtless find in this fact material for coarse jesting. Pseudo-scientists will say that it indicates the existence of some suppressed "urge." The Church looks upon these possible misunderstandings patiently, but she never for a moment doubts her conviction or denies her doctrine that love, human or divine, once it be worthy of the name, is a holy and mystical thing. In the Catholic marriage ceremony the bride and groom come within the gates of the sanctuary, to the very threshold of the tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, not that a veil of decency may be cast over something in itself obscene, but that solemn recognition may be made of the sanctity of conjugal love.[6]

[6] It may be interesting to present a translation of the prayers said over the newly married couple in a nuptial Mass:

"Let us pray. Graciously hear our prayers, O Lord, and in thy loving kindness, impart thy blessing to the union which thou hast appointed for the propagation of the race of man; nor, by thy grace, may what Thou thyself hast joined, ever be put asunder."

"O God, who hast consecrated wedlock by a surpassing mystery, since in holy matrimony is shown forth the sacrament of Christ and his Church; O God, who joinest woman to man, and ordainest their life in common chiefly in order that theirs might be that blessing given by Thee in the beginning, and which alone, neither the punishment thou didst inflict for the sin of our first parents, nor thy wrath shown in the flood, took away; look down in mercy upon this thine handmaid who, being about to enter upon wedded life, seeks to be strengthened by thy protection; may the yoke she has to bear be one of love and of peace; faithful and chaste, may she marry in Christ, her whole life

It has been said that one may read all the epic poems of the Greeks and Romans (the poems that were not only a literature but a philosophy, a theology,—in a word, an encyclopedia of pagan belief and custom) and not find a single indication of chivalrous love of man for woman. "The conception presented by the Madonna," says W. S. Lilly, "would have been foolishness to the ancient Greeks, and Romans, too. It was a stumbling block to the Jews. . . . But when a thousand years had passed away and chivalry arose, the 'all but adoring love' of Christians for the Blessed Virgin Mary stimulated the quasi religious veneration paid in the Middle Ages to the graces of feminine nature, a veneration which striking a note before unheard of in the world, has inspired the highest poetry of modern civilization." [7] True: The medieval knight made his prayers to the Blessed Virgin and sang his *chansons* to his ladylove; the prayers and the love song were in much the same strain. But if the Freudians of our day imagine that the religion of the knights was "erotic," it would be well for them to remember that these knights were above all virile. They swaggered and fought in suits of mail that a Freudian could not carry,—not to say wear on the battlefield. They wielded with facility a sword that a modern warrior could hardly lift. They were

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modelled upon that of the holy women; may she be pleasing to her husband as was Rachel; may she be wise as Rebecca; may she be long-lived and true, as was Sara; may he who is the author of all evil tell not at all in her actions; may she pass her days true to the troth she has plighted, and faithful in her obedience; devoted to one man only, may she take heed lest she care for another; may she strengthen her own weakness with wholesome discipline; may she be respected for her seriousness, and venerated for her modesty; may she be well versed in all heavenly teachings; may she be prolific in offspring. In all things may she be approved and innocent, and thus, in the end, attain to the rest of the blessed and to the kingdom of heaven. And may the one and the other of these see their children's children to the third and fourth generation, and come to the good old age they look forward to."

[7] W. S. Lilly, *Holy Matrimony in Christianity and Modern Civilization* (London, Chapman & Hall, 1903), p. 339.

giants in those days, not sickly sentimentalists or neurotic perverts, and their love for their inamorata, like their devotion to the Mother of Fair Love, was masculine as well as mystical.

As in life, so in literature. The most familiar instance of a highly idealized and yet very real love of man for woman is that of the love of Dante for Beatrice, a love that burned like a white flame, and was as pure. But not only Dante, all the troubadours and the minnesingers sang of love, passionate love, of man for woman, in phrases that might well have been chanted in prayer. Hence it came to pass that the tradition of romantic, ideal, spiritual love has influenced all poetry, even to our own time. The love-poems and love-songs of Christian people reveal the conviction that the love of man and woman is holy.

It cannot be said, therefore, that the Christian tradition of the sacredness of marriage rests only upon a dogma. Not that it would be less true if it did. There is nothing contemptible in the idea of dogma, though in the mouth of many moderns the very word is an epithet of vituperation. For a dogma, after all, is nothing but a fixed fundamental principle. Thought without fixed principles, that is to say, without dogma, is like a river without banks. Perhaps this is the reason for the contemporary disdain for dogma. The modern mind likes to burst all boundaries and to flood a wide territory. But what it gains in expansion, it loses in direction and force. Something may be done with a river if it remains within its banks, but when it breaks all barriers, natural and artificial, the result is only devastation and dirt. So it is well to have a dogma in defense of marriage. But the sacredness of marriage does not rest on dogma alone. There is something back of dogma,—God who reveals and man who responds. It is futile for God to reveal unless man is equipped to accept. Now the ideal expressed in the dogma of the divinity of love was latent in the human heart,

and when once the race was assured that its ideal was true, that the love of man and woman is not a shameful but a noble thing, so noble indeed that Jesus thought it worthy to be a sacrament, men and women accepted that revelation eagerly, and from that time the idea commenced to influence all civilization. Not only religion, but romance, art, music, and poetry, inspired by the new gospel, were reborn.

Fortunately the instinctive love of purity in the human soul has not been altogether destroyed by centuries of paganism. Especially in those parts of the world where corruption had least penetrated, there remained a dim memory of the sanctity of the relationship of primeval man and woman. "The Germans," says Tacitus, with some surprise and with admiration, "believe there is something divine in woman, *inesse quid divinum.*" So, such men and women as were not hopelessly depraved welcomed the idea of holy love as they welcomed the good news of the Incarnation of God,—and for the same reason, because it ennobled and beautified life and bade fair to regenerate mankind. The race may be for a long time degraded, but it is never permanently and finally demoralized. It is always seeking to be reborn and redeemed. To the materialist these tendencies of the human heart may seem illusions, but they are facts alike for history and psychology. Science is supposed never to scorn a fact, but to welcome it, and to make some attempt to explain it. But how shall a materialistic science attempt to explain the fact of man's ineradicable idealism?

However persistent may be the effort of evolution to identify man with the brute, to deny his kinship with the pure spirits and with God, man will never accept the debasing doctrine. You may call him a placental mammal, but "A man's a man for a' that." You may tell him that love is absurd and obscene, but he will continue to look upon love as beautiful. The human heart is invet-

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erately mystical. If, therefore, one rejects the idea of marriage as a sacrament, logically he must reject art, music, literature, and all culture.

It cannot be denied, however, that the moral idealism which makes men hold marriage sacred can be seriously impaired. Whenever religion declines, there comes simultaneously the decadence of morality. And the first of the moralities to decay is sex morality. Unfortunately, the severest blow to the Christian concept of marriage was dealt not by pagans but by Christians, not as an open attack upon revealed religion, but as a measure of "reform." The two chiefs of the Protestant Reformation, Luther and Calvin, though they disagreed violently on many matters, were strangely (one might almost think suspiciously) in accord on the non-sacred character of marriage. "No one can deny," says Luther, "that marriage is an external, worldly thing, like clothes and food, house and home, subject to worldly authority. Not only is the sacramental character of matrimony without foundation in Scripture, but the very traditions which claim such sacredness for it are a mere jest. Nowhere do we read that he who takes a wife will receive any grace from God." And Calvin continues the thought: "What man in his sober senses could regard marriage as a sacrament. God's ordinance of marriage is good and holy, so also are agriculture, architecture, shoemaking, haircutting, legitimate ordinances of God, but they are not sacraments.[8] Again and again Luther hammered home his teaching that marriage is a purely secular affair to be dealt with only by the State. "Matrimonial affairs," he says, "have nothing to do with the conscience, but have to be sent to the secular authorities. Therefore none of you [ministers] shall meddle with them except when the authorities com-

[8] Lehmkuhl, art., "Marriage, Sacrament of," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, quoting Luther's *Von Den Ehesachen* and *de Captivitate Babylonica*, and Calvin's *Institutes*, IV, xix, 34.

mand it. Marriage has nothing to do with the Church, it is outside the Church, it is a temporal and secular thing. Know then that whenever the Emperor or the authorities, by their laws and ordinances, annul a marriage, it is not man that does it but God." [9] It is needless to accumulate other texts from Luther inculcating the complete secularization of marriage. His views are too well known to need rehearsing. Sincere Christian men and women in our day, deeply worried over the tragic condition of marriage, and seeking for the source of the demoralization, are wont to place the blame entirely on the renascence of paganism. But in fact the chaos derives directly from the early Protestant secularization of marriage.

It must also be recalled that Luther's practice was as loose as his doctrine. He told his followers that wherever the Pope had granted dispensations, now "a brother may grant them to a brother, or a man may dispense himself." In spite of his warnings to ministers not to make themselves lawmakers or judges in matrimonial cases, he himself legislated that the wife of an impotent man, by juridical process, with the consent of her husband, may contract a new and secret marriage either with his brother or with another man, or if her husband refuses to consent, she may run away and marry somewhere else, where she is not known." [10] He scoffed, furthermore, at the notion of impediments to marriage. He allowed cousins to marry, and decided that a man might marry his father's half sister, or his own niece. The ancient impediment of "crime," which made matrimony impossible between persons of whom one at least had been married before and

[9] J. Verres, *Luther, an Historical Portrait* (London, Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1884), p. 212, quoted from De Wette, III, 194, and Tischreden, IIc. 20, par. 107, 108. Also in the English translation of Hazlitt, No. 748. See also Lacey, *op. cit.*, p. 169. Also Hartmann Grisar, S.J., *Luther*, tr. by E. M. Lamond (St. Louis, B. Herder; London, Kegan Paul, 1914), *passim*, especially Vol. III, p. 242ff.

[10] The text of Luther's decision is given in Verres, l.c.

who with a view to matrimony have committed adultery, or murder, or both, he set aside with his usual violence of language. He permits a husband whose wife, after repeated admonitions before others refuses to render the conjugal debt, to consider her as dead and enter upon a new marriage. In connection with this kind of case, he also gave his celebrated decision, "If the wife refuses, let the servant maid come." He sanctioned the adultery of Landgraf Philip of Hesse, and of all princes. He said their concubinage was "a true marriage before God," and compared it with that of the patriarchs. He advised Henry VIII of England not to seek a divorce but to take a second wife. And finally, in company with Melanchthon, Bucer, and five others, he issued a dispensation permitting Philip to commit bigamy. In a word, the reformers opened the gates wide, and naturally the flood followed. Christian marriage has never been the same since these demoralizing decrees were issued from Wittenberg.

It would not be true, however, to say that all the evil consequences happened immediately. The Christian tradition of more than a thousand years was too strong to be broken down in a day or a century. In Germany, indeed, and elsewhere, appalling conditions prevailed immediately after the outbreak of Lutheranism.[11] But the better instincts of man asserted themselves again and the power of the ancient Catholic tradition has for centuries saved European society from what well might have been the results of Luther's highly immoral teaching. But slowly the full implications of the new doctrine began to be felt, and it is not strange that the most radical and revolutionary contemporary opinions on marriage, divorce, and sex morality have come out of Scandinavian countries where the Lutheran tradition was strongest. Ellen Key has

[11] For the almost incredible corruption of morals in Germany under Luther, see Döllinger, *Die Reformation, passim;* and Grisar's *Luther,* Vol. IV, Ch. xxiv.

reproduced the frankly animal concept of marriage that was preached so vehemently by Martin Luther. "Purity," she says, "is too dearly won if it costs irreparable losses of vital joy, courage, and power," a sentiment quite after the mind of Luther, though too decently worded to be in his vulgar manner. She protests against "the existing contradiction between sexual needs and the form of their legitimate gratification." To speak in plain language, she proposes that at least for some purposes adultery and fornication be made legal, and considered honorable. "In these cases," she says, "where a woman suffers a lasting and unendurable clogging of her life through the want of motherhood she must choose the lesser evil of becoming a mother even without love, in or out of wedlock. Necessity is its own law. The unmarried woman from her point of view, as well as that of the race, has a right to motherhood." [12]

The immoral doctrine has naturally not been confined to Scandinavia or other Lutheran countries. Speaking in England, Mrs. Clara Gasquoine Hartley says: "We have got, I am certain, to recognize that our form of marriage, —the monogamous union,—cannot meet the sex needs of all people. . . . The extending of the opportunity of honorable love must be faced before we can hope for more moral conditions in marriage. . . . Partnerships other than marriage have had a place as a recognized and guarded institution in many older and more primitive societies, and it may be, as I have tried to show, that the conditions brought upon us after the World War may act in forcing upon us a similar acceptance. . . . I would let those who cannot marry be openly permitted to live together in temporary childless unions." [13]

Here we have the new tradition in full bloom. Count-

[12] *Love and Marriage*, p. 3ff.

[13] *Motherhood and the Relationships of the Sexes* (N.Y., Dodd Mead & Company), pp. 249, 250, 251.

less other evidences of it will be recalled by those who read the current periodicals or the newspapers. In *Harper's Magazine* for October, 1927,—to give but one example—a woman who attacks the more extreme type of feminism says nevertheless that some women feel the need of children more than a husband, and so "they vow that they would have one or two out of wedlock if it were not for the penalty that society would exact from the child, and if it were not for the fact that the child needs a father as much as a mother." This is indeed a moderate expression of feminism, because most of the members of that movement profess a defiant independence of all social penalties attaching to the violation of the Christian code. Their most familiar slogan, after Ellen Key's, is that "all motherhood is sacred." Forel declares that distinction between legitimate and illegitimate motherhood is immoral.[14]

In the English-speaking world, the agitation for the degradation of marriage as a sacrament, and for the increase in divorce, was carried on by John Milton, who urged that divorce should be granted whenever a husband and wife agreed to ask for it, or even when either one asked for it. Three hundred years later, Mr. George Bernard Shaw, presumably an original thinker, advocates the same thing almost in Milton's identical words. The modern agitation for the looseness of the marriage bond goes back, therefore, to the early Protestants, even more than to ancient Greek or Roman paganism, for its arguments. Occasionally we find the curious phenomenon of a Christian minister appealing for a revival of the pagan custom, as for example when Dr. Guthrie, a clergyman of the Episcopal Church in New York, says: "Much confusion arises because we think that all marriages must be on the same level. In ancient Rome the senatorial marriage, made amidst pomp and ceremony, was indissoluble. The plebeian, made without pomp and ceremony, was

[14] See F. W. Foerster, *Marriage and the Sex Problem*, tr. by Meyrick Booth (N. Y., Frederick A. Stokes), p. 30.

equally legitimate but could be dissolved." The reverend gentleman is not merely announcing an objective historical fact. He thinks that "increased divorce is but a premonition of progress in idealism," and that "because folk are more rebellious against marriage is but a sign that they are conscious of the ideal state."[15] These sentences indicate a peculiar mental twist, but they are quite in the Miltonian tradition of arguing for more license in the interest of reform.

One of the most recent and most pathetic illustrations of the modern tendency to advocate perfect autonomy in sexual conduct is to be found in a questionnaire used in an elective course in sociology, which was being followed by some seventy members of the senior class of 1924-1925, at Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Although the questionnaire was not composed by the teaching staff of the college,—but by a committee chosen from the seventy seniors themselves,—it was prepared as a consequence of the lectures of the Professor of Sociology, Frank H. Hankins, to whom it was submitted. He alleges that he objected to some of the questions. Among others the questionnaire included these three:

3. Which do you prefer for yourself?
   a. A companionate without marriage?
   b. A companionate with marriage?
   c. Marriage with children?
   d. Children without marriage?

10. Do you think women who are able to support themselves should be permitted to have children without marriage?

19. Should girls have more freedom to seek sex experience before marriage than is now generally approved?
   a. Would you use this freedom under favorable circumstances?
   b. Have you had such experience? Once? Occasionally? Frequently?

[15] Interview in N. Y. Sunday *Telegram*, October 15, 1922.

Apart from the too flagrant immorality implied in this questionnaire, it is remarkable as an evidence of the complete rout of the idea of the sacredness of marriage in certain circles. It would doubtless be unwise to take that questionnaire as indicative of the moral condition of society at large. If society in general had such principles, there would be no society. For with these views predominating we should be well on the way back to the sexual promiscuity of the degenerate primitives. But the document is symptomatic of a more or less general demoralization that began when marriage was denied its sacramental dignity. It would be blindness not to recognize that the current condition of sex morality is perilously bad. It would be vain to imagine that it can be cured by patchwork legislation or by experimentation in sex relationships. There can be but one remedy, a renewal of the original Christian idea of marriage as a holy institution, a sacrament.

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD ON DIVORCE

CHAPTER IV

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD ON DIVORCE

FROM a casual reading of the public press, and perhaps even more from a cursory examination of current works of sociology, one might imagine that the problem of divorce is of interest principally to statisticians. Even moralists and preachers, when they talk of divorce, run largely to figures. But it is doubtful if any great service to civilization can be done by arithmetic. "It did not please the Lord to save His people by logic," says St. Ambrose, and perhaps we may be permitted to add that neither will He save them by mathematics. So, when the statisticians tell us that there are over one hundred thousand divorces each year in the United States, ten times as many as there were fifty years ago; or that in the first decade after the World War the rate increased twenty per cent; or that since 1890 divorce has increased nearly three times as fast as the population; or that in one generation there have been 2,349,419 divorces in this country, the information is accepted by some with complacence, by others with alarm, but by the majority with little or no mental reaction. For even those of us who are scandalized are so bludgeoned with statistics that our brain is benumbed and ceases to function.

Too many persons, looking at the great American scandal of divorce from without, particularly from England, Ireland and Canada, consider it an appalling phenomenon, indeed, but also as a reason for a little pharisaical self-congratulation. They thank God that they are

not as these Americans, adulterers and divorcees. It is, however, no time for selfish complacency. America is scarcely worse than France, and not so bad as Russia. Scandinavian countries are notoriously lax in the matter of divorce. England is not too sure of her momentary superiority. The Irish Free State must wrestle with the problem of legalizing divorce. Canada is slowly but surely approaching the license of her neighbor to the south. A survey of the world leaves little room for rejoicing. Indeed, there is danger of what William T. Stead used to call the Americanization of the world, at least as far as divorce is concerned.

Sometimes the scandalous facts are presented in a spirit of raillery, not only by professional comedians, but by cynical philosophers, who, apparently, think to reform the race by satire. This, too, is doubtful tactics. When Juvenal, with biting wit, told of the Roman woman who counted her years not by consuls but by husbands, the Romans only laughed. They saw the joke but missed the moral. So, in our day, when ancient jests about divorce are refurbished by our laborious jokesmiths, they receive the mead of silly laughter. No one seems to get angry. Few seem to understand that the very making of such jokes, and the patience of the public in tolerating them, are an indictment of our civilization. So long as divorce, like drunkenness, is considered funny, there will be no reform.

While the statisticians and the comedians are busy with the divorce question, statesmen are, as a rule, chary of it. We have international conferences on disarmament, but how many instances are there of statesmen initiating international or even national conferences on the divorce problem? There are a few. In the United States the most serious attempt to abate the divorce evil by legislation was made in 1906 upon the initiative of the State of Pennsylvania. An unofficial congress on divorce met in the

capital city, Washington, attended by delegates from all the States except three—Nevada, notoriously lax and mercenary, South Carolina, the only State denying divorce in every case, and Mississippi, perhaps the most ardent antagonist of Federal authority as an interference with States' rights. Recommendations were made that the Federal Congress should tighten up legislation on divorce. Some of the States represented at the congress adopted a few of the suggestions made, but the net result, after twenty-one years, is almost nil. In the 68th National Congress resolutions were introduced to amend the Constitution of the United States to enable Congress to legislate on marriage and divorce. Nothing came of the resolution, and there is no immediate prospect of Federal legislation on the matter. In one place, Kansas City, there is a "divorce proctor," who in the civil courts has a position analogous to that of the *defensor vinculi matrimonii* in the ecclesiastical courts. In one year, 1911, having discovered that trickery and perjury were rife amongst those who sought divorce, by strict procedure he succeeded in reducing the number of divorces granted by forty per cent!

All in all, however, statesmen seem either unconcerned or afraid to take up the question of divorce. One of the wisest and the sanest of American publicists, Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University, in an address on the "Lost Art of Thinking," asks: "What of the profound and far-reaching problems that face the American People? Who is discussing them? Are we not entitled to ask what may be the attitude and purpose of these individuals . . . toward the constitutional, social and moral problems raised by the Eighteenth Amendment and the legislation built upon it? Or toward the world-wide problem of the land and the difficult lot of the agriculturist in a world of shifting economic emphasis in which he is surrounded by a huge industrial system which

dominates the commercial and financial activities of the twentieth century? Or toward the question, whose answer brooks of no delay, as to international coöperation to establish, protect and preserve international peace?"

Dr. Butler's assemblage of problems that demand statesmanlike consideration is impressive, but there is one significant omission. The question of divorce is more vital to the welfare of the nation than any he has mentioned. It does not strike him that the problem of marriage and divorce calls for the closest attention of statesmen of the better sort. Your typical statesman considers it just as much out of the way for a government to concern itself with the problems of marriage and divorce as for, let us say, the conference at Versailles to govern its meetings by the Sermon on the Mount. Of all absurd political notions (and their name is legion) the silliest is that a disintegrating civilization can be held together by conferences on disarmament, or by diplomatic maneuvering. If history teaches us anything, we ought to know that the fate of nations does not depend upon the encouragement of international trade, the payment of war debts, the equitable arrangement of customs and taxes, the regulation of commercial rivalries, and other such relatively trivial affairs. What doth it profit a state to arrange all these details, if the home, the family, the soul of the state, be lost? Statesmen are careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary—domestic morality. Yet they avoid the problem of divorce, perhaps thinking it to be a personal matter, or fearing to encroach upon religion. But if they dare not deal with the problem, they have already announced to the world the bankruptcy of the modern concept of Government.

In a very significant article on "Monogamy as a Condition of Social Energy," J. D. Unwin, after reviewing the history of the rise and fall of ancient empires, and explaining their fate by the theory that monogamy is

essential to national vigor, says, "The rise and expansion of England's power and influence is contemporaneous with the preservation of marriage as a life-long institution." And he adds ominously, "as her decline is not yet an historical fact, the evidence stops there."[1] Whether the connection of England's power with her strictness about marriage is a mere coincidence, or whether there is a connection of cause and effect between the two facts, the significance of the statement might well cause English statesmen to ponder carefully before legally authorizing the weakening of the marriage bond. As for the United States, it is short-sighted for the President and his party to boast of our prevailing prosperity—as they frequently do—if domestic morality is declining while prosperity is increasing. One needs not be a prophet to predict that ruin impends when morality declines. The statesman who knows this obvious fact and yet muddles along amidst a mess of other concerns, ignoring the crucial question of marriage and divorce, is to all intents and purposes a traitor. The statesman who does not see or understand the fact—is no statesman.

But again the disturbing question arises, what can a government do? Can the divorce evil be cured by legislation? It must be admitted that the history of attempts to rehabilitate marriage by secular legislation are not reassuring. In Rome a dozen imperial or senatorial decrees were launched in a desperate effort to stem the tide of sexual immorality, to encourage marriage, to discourage

[1] *Hibbert Journal*, July, 1927. Mr. Unwin's general thesis is that nations increase in power when they practice absolute monogamy and decrease when they fall away from it. He defines "absolute monogamy" as "the state of having only one husband or wife at one time." And he thinks that absolute monogamy was unfavorably affected by organized and consistent exhortation to monasticism; that England passed Spain in the race for supremacy after England had rejected monasticism. Whether the fallacy *post hoc propter hoc* is involved, the reader must judge, but it would seem that there is truth in the statement quoted in the text.

bachelorhood, and to lessen the number of divorces. Commencing with the *Lex Julia* in the days of Augustus, and continuing even in Christian times with the laws of Constantine, Theodosius, Honorius, and Justinian, divorce was more and more strictly regulated, but with very unsatisfactory results. Only when a true Christendom had been erected and a Catholic public opinion had been universally diffused, was there an adequate check to the ancient pagan license. In modern times the Code Napoleon was an attempt to restore some degree of marriage morality after the anarchy of the Revolution, but again under the Third Republic divorce was made easy. The way was prepared for the present serious demoralization in France.[2]

In truth, no legislation, civil or ecclesiastical, can be effective unless an ideal is alive in the soul of the people. The late William Graham Sumner, principal exponent in America of the *mores* theory of ethics, used to say that no group ever had an ethical ideal. If that were a fact, it would be in itself an adequate answer to the question, "What's wrong with the world?" But, of course, it is not a fact. The noblest of all ethical ideals, that of Jesus Christ, was accepted by all civilized society for centuries, and at the present day there are several hundreds of millions of people who hold to it. W. S. Lilly, in his "Essay on Holy Matrimony," in the volume *Christianity and Modern Civilization,* says with justifiable enthusiasm: "There are few things in history more astonishing—we may say in the strictest sense miraculous—than the fact, for fact it is, that a few words spoken in Syria, two thousand years ago, by a Jewish peasant, 'despised and

[2] Oddly enough, some Americans have been seeking divorce in France, as if it were not easy enough to obtain divorce at home. But in October, 1927, legislation was enacted in France demanding of alien petitioners for divorce, first, that they shall be *bona fide* residents of France; second, that there should be some good cause for presenting the petition in France; third, that the reason alleged for the divorce should be valid in the native country of the petitioner.

rejected of men.' brought about this vast change [the new creation of marriage] which has wrought so much to purify and ennoble modern civilization." And he quotes from De Wette, who admirably expresses the principle underlying Christ's legislation: "Christ grounds wedlock on the original interdependence of the two sexes, and lays it down that as one cannot exist without the other, the inseparability of their union should follow. This union is indeed the work of man, but it takes place and ever should take place through an inner tendency proceeding from the original interdependence of the sexes, through love. The separation, on the other hand . . . takes place through human arbitrariness or through lust and passion, which unfairly or inconsistently annul what was ordained in conformity with the original law of Nature."

The principle thus proclaimed is obviously mystical. The interdependence of the sexes is not merely physiological. If it were so, there might be no compelling reason why the union of a man and woman might not be broken and another union formed. Rationalists, who are at the same time materialists (though strictly speaking a rationalist-materialist is a contradiction of terms), labor under the delusion that marriage is only a carnal union, and procreation a purely physiological function. They see no romance, no "poetry," no mysticism, in the union of man and woman. Consequently, we cannot expect them to understand Christ's idealism, or that of St. Paul, who explained that the union of husband and wife is symbolic of the union of Christ with His Church. The concept of the Church as the mystical body of Christ, from which Christ cannot be separated any more than He can be separated from Himself, is to the materialists, as we have already seen, religious jargon. These "realists" cannot see an ideal. Ideals are unreal to them. But any philosopher, pagan or Christian, could tell them that the highest Reality is the Ideal. The Ultimate Ideal is God, and without

God there is neither real nor ideal. I am quite well aware, as I write these sentences, that they must sound like a jingle to one who admits the existence only of such things as he can see and touch and taste and handle. But if these phrases be only a pious lingo, religion is indeed illusion and so also is all intellectual life and all art, and, of course, all morality. If one chooses because of an idolatrous devotion to a materialistic philosophy (another anomaly: there can be no materialistic philosophy) to accept all these anarchical conclusions,—no religion, no intellectual life, no spiritual faculty or spiritual activity, no morality, or at least no permanent standard or ideal of morality, to which the race may be brought back after going morally astray,—such a one cannot help us solve the problem at hand, or any other moral or social problem.

So we turn back to Christ. He preached no gospel of despair. He knew what was in man and yet He believed in man, that is to say, He believed that man was capable of seeing and loving an ideal. With this in mind, He pronounced His doctrine of marriage and divorce. That doctrine is found in the Gospels. In St. Mark, chapter x, we read: "The Pharisees came to Jesus and asked him, 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?' tempting Him. But Jesus answering said to them, 'What did Moses command you?' And they said, 'Moses permitted us to write a bill of divorce and to put her away.' Jesus answering said, 'because of the hardness of your hearts, Moses wrote you that precept, but from the beginning it was not so; for from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh. Therefore, now they are not two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let not man put asunder.' "

Comment upon those words is superfluous. But of course the Pharisees pretended not to understand, as many

who read the Bible today pretend not to understand the dogmatic and uncompromising teaching of Christ. That text, like hundreds of others in the Scripture, has been twisted and tortured by those who really wish to follow their own code, but without ostensibly rejecting the Code of Christ. However, it seems that not only obdurate enemies of Christ, but His affectionate friends, were disturbed by the unexpected rigor of His doctrine. A modern commentator suggests that even the disciples must have considered Jesus' teaching extreme and fanatical. But Christ surely did not retract it. On the contrary, speaking to the disciples in private, He elucidated His doctrine still further: "Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if the wife shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery." Such is the record of the words of Christ in St. Mark. St. Matthew has the same doctrine, in almost identical words, and St. Luke repeats, "Everyone that putteth away his wife and marries another committeth adultery, and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery."

As if for fear that a wicked and adulterous generation might still find some clever way of distorting the meaning of Christ's plain statement, St. Paul reiterates and further develops the Master's teaching: "To them that are married, not I, but the Lord commandeth, that the wife depart not from her husband. And if she depart that she remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband. A woman is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth, but if her husband die she is at liberty. Let her marry whom she will, only in the Lord. Therefore, while her husband liveth she shall be called an adulteress if she be with another man" (Cor. vii. 10ff., 39). The great Apostle continues, even at still greater length, to amplify the teaching of Christ. But that will suffice. It must be evident to anyone who accepts the Scripture record

that Christian doctrine is flatly against divorce. It is to be feared, however, that many, for whom personal considerations are always paramount, really care no more about the moral code of the Gospel than they do for the Code of Hammarubi, or the Koran of Mohammed.[3]

As for us who acknowledge Christ as God to be the Absolute Norm of all morality, we dutifully and religiously acquiesce in His teaching on the insolubility of the matrimonial bond. To us it matters not what other legislation there may be on the question, except as a matter of antiquarian or historical research. The code of the twelve tables at Rome, the legislation of Solon and Lycurgus, of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian, or the French Emperor Napoleon, interests us only academically. Likewise, it matters not much to us what more modern and even less enlightened legislators have enacted concerning divorce, except insofar as from them we may gauge whether modern society has adhered to or departed from the doctrine laid down by the First and Last Authority on the moral life.

We count it nugatory also to dispute about alleged instances where even Christian custom departed from the law of Christ. Doubtless there were individual clerics here and there, and an occasional provincial synod that permitted divorce in some circumstances, but, as Lehmkuhl says, "The synods of all centuries and more clearly still the decrees of the Popes have constantly declared that

[3] In the fifth and the nineteenth chapters of St. Matthew, there is, as all are aware, an apparent permission of remarriage after divorce on one condition. The text reads: "Whoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery. And he that shall marry her that is put away committeth adultery." There has been much disputing over the meaning of the phrase, not found in Mark or Luke, "except it be for fornication," but in view of the other unqualified statements and the repeated commentary of St. Paul, I think it will be admitted that St. Matthew means that in case of fornication (or more strictly, adultery), there may be a separation but no divorce followed by marriage.

divorce which annulled marriage and permitted remarriage was never allowed." [4]

In recent years it has become customary for "liberal" exponents of Christian theology to reject, openly or tacitly, the teaching of Christ, and, incidentally, to vituperate "churlish priests" for attempting to enforce what the liberals consider a cruel and impossible dogma. An Anglican clergyman in New York City, Dr. Percy Stickney Grant, in the midst of a scandalous altercation with his Bishop, gave public expression to his contempt for the "dogmatists" who would enforce the ancient law of Christ. "The home is in danger," he said. "Our greatest problem is to save it from collapse. But how? The answer of the dogmatists is to enforce a formula. The answer of the scientists is to study the new conditions, to discover how they came about, and to attempt to adjust our thinking to the new demands of life."[5]

Here, as usual, the "dogmatists" (sometimes they are damned with the equally opprobrious epithet "medievalists") are made to bear the blame for what any honest Scripture reader must see is really the legislation of Christ. Doubtless the dogmatists are willing and happy to receive at least some of the blows aimed at their Lord, but none the less it is a pity that recalcitrant clergymen should attempt to persuade newspaper readers that the divorce legislation of the Catholic Church was the invention of the dogmatists rather than the direct teaching of Jesus.

As for "adjusting our thinking to the new demands of life," is not that phrase a euphemism for what the politicians call "keeping one's ear to the ground," and "giving the people what they want"? And is the reverend gentleman not subscribing,—perhaps unconsciously,—

[4] In *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, art., "Divorce, in Moral Theology"; a particularly learned dissertation.

[5] New York Sunday *World*, September 3, 1922. Dr. Grant later resigned from the ministry.

to the *mores* theory of ethics, as if "new demands" could lawfully make a change in fundamental moral precepts?

A confrere of Dr. Grant, William Norman Guthrie, in charge of an Episcopalian congregation in New York City, takes a different attitude. With serene disregard of the obvious meaning of the Gospel, he says, "We lower Christ when we make Him a legislator in the matter of divorce. What He has given us concerning marriage is in picturesque language an ideal society. We Christians presume that Christ had the wisdom of all ages to come, but He has not given us an ideal Constitution of the United States." It would be a distinct cruelty to analyze that statement closely. The last sentence is a sufficient revelation of the mentality of its author. But it has some value as an indication of the tendency to use legerdemain to persuade oneself that Christ said nothing of practical importance about marriage and divorce.

Still more desperate is the device of those who, gravitating away from the Gospels, attempt to convince themselves, by dubious reasoning, that divorce is a means to the realization of the ideal. One prominent popular lecturer, who has addressed literally millions of the common people from Chautauqua platforms throughout the United States, has again and again uttered the slogan, "The cure for divorce is more divorce." It is like saying that the remedy for a flood is more rain, or that the quickest way to extinguish a conflagration is to pour oil on the flames. It is hard to understand those who preach such arrant nonsense. Perhaps, after all, they are merely trying to be extravagant and paradoxical, after the fashion of Bernard Shaw, who calls divorce "a sacramental duty," insists that "the only question that should never be put to a petitioner for divorce is 'Why?'" and demands "an immoral statesman who would encourage illicit unions if they are more fruitful than licit unions." [6] Neither

[6] In the preface to *Getting Married.*

moralists nor statesmen can hope to profit from the flippant remarks of such jesters,—or anarchists,—as these.

If it be objected that the unqualified prohibition of divorce is cruel, and therefore contrary to the ethos of the Christian religion, a religion of mercy, and to the character of Jesus, the Gentle Nazarene, the only adequate reply must be, "Search the Scriptures"; search and see that the Gospels are a veritable concatenation of "hard sayings." Even without searching, one can immediately recall a number of frightfully severe utterances of Jesus: "Lord, suffer me to go bury my father." "Let the dead bury the dead and come thou follow me!" "If any man come to me and hate not father and mother . . . yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off. If thy eye offend thee, pluck it out." The complete list would be astonishing to those who have evolved the idea that the Gospels are namby-pamby. Making due allowance for the hyperbole in these hard sayings, the fact emerges that Christ was not afraid to ask heroic things from those who would follow Him. The Gospels were a stumbling-block to the generation to which they were first preached. They are equally offensive to our own soft and sentimental age. In our Lord's day, those who objected to His austerity, rejected His teaching, root and branch, and put Him to death. In our day, even those who call themselves Christians have invented the legend of a mealy-mouthed Master.

When Jesus pronounced His dogma (be it always remembered it is His) that the marriage bond shall not be broken, even His disciples, heirs to the Mosaic tradition, complained, "If it be so with a man, it were better not to marry." But the Divine Lawgiver did not waver. He replied, "Not all take that word, but he that can take it, let him take it." Christ evidently was not frightened by the bugaboo of celibacy. Nor has His Church betrayed

Him. Millions, yes thousands of millions, have been virgins for Jesus' sake. And the married, when continence is demanded for the general good of society, if true Christians, do not cry out against the Gospel as tyranny; still less would they even be tempted to think Christ a fanatic. The "liberal" Christian will continue to torture the Scriptures to find tolerance of divorce; disingenuous opponents of the Gospel will flay the "priests in black gowns" who after all are committing no crime but the repetition verbatim of the teaching of Jesus.

The *Imitation of Christ,* a sweet and gentle document indeed, after enumerating the hardships in the life of a good monk, says, "Eternal life is worth this and more." The philosophy of the Gospels is in that remark. Nothing is too difficult if it be for eternal life. The Christian looks at all things in the light of eternity. If he has made an unfortunate marriage, so wretchedly unfortunate as to be intolerable, he asks for a separation, and faces a life of continence in the spirit of a martyr. Once more let us admit that self-control, carried to this degree, is counted insanity by a pagan world that considers carnal commerce an absolute necessity to human nature. To the natural man, the supernatural is unintelligible. Not understanding it he calls it lunacy, just as the savage gives harsh names to all phenomena that *he* cannot understand.

However, there are pagans of a nobler, more stoic breed, who if occasion demand are ready to practice prolonged or permanent continence, even though married. We have all known cases of red-blooded men who, having invalid wives, have lived faithfully, if only from self-respect and loyalty, purely natural virtues. If one adds a supernatural motive and uses supernatural means, it will not be difficult to keep the law of Christ. Unless civilization reverts to the law of Christ, it will be once again destroyed by the swiftly increasing evil of divorce.

BIRTH CONTROL: NO "PROBLEM" BUT A BLUNDER AND A CRIME

CHAPTER V

BIRTH CONTROL: NO "PROBLEM" BUT A BLUNDER AND A CRIME

If there be one Scriptural injunction more freely disregarded than another nowadays, it is that of St. Paul, "Let these things be not so much as mentioned among you." Reticence is all but obsolete. It has gone the way of reverence, and even further along the way. No subject is tabu in contemporary conversation; the vocabulary of the clinic has been introduced even into the drawing room. Some observers of this change in manners are trying desperately to persuade themselves that it is "all for the best." The new frankness, they declare, is a welcome relief from the suffocating hypocrisy of the mid-Victorian era. We are asked to accept the paradox that morals are better because they seem worse. On the other hand, modesty in dress and demeanor is taken as *prima facie* evidence of an immodest mind. Indeed, a new psychology has come into vogue based upon the theory that all inhibitions, that is to say all self-restraint, is dangerous, because it enchains *libido* in the unconscious. Which means (to drop the Freudian jargon) that our parents and grandparents, who lived in an age of reticence, were of necessity sex-morbid. Consequently, they were, largely, neurasthenics. Blushing and fainting and swooning, familiar feminine customs in the Victorian epoch, were due not to tight lacing, and lack of athletic exercise, but to repression of the "sex urge." Of course there are certain obstacles in the way of an unqualified acceptance of this ugly theory. Inhibitions have been released, but

neurasthenia is still prevalent. Commercial psychology has taken a place beside dentistry and chiropody. Psychoanalysts have hung out their shingles, and are doing a big business. But there has been no appreciable decline in the number of the insane. Asylums and sanatoriums are still crowded. Long queues of patients trail from the neurological clinics. In fact it would seem that nervous diseases are more rampant than ever before. The entire age seems hectic and hysterical.

But if we have not cured our diseases, we have surely gotten rid of restraint and reserve. Particularly, reticence in speech is gone. Consider the following conversation reported by an ear-witness, Miss Elsie Clews Parsons.[1] The *dramatis personæ* are a well-known feminist, her daughter, an Episcopalian clergyman, and, for one brief but important moment, the girl's father.

"Let there be no divorce," said the cleric, "on any ground, at least within the church."

"Children should be cared for by both parents, divorce being sought only as an ultimate recourse," said the girl, who was two years married and had a son.

The feminist was biding her time. Finally she said: "So much for the institution. What of the actual sex life? No divorce and continence or no divorce and intimacy with another?"

"The first, of course," said the cleric.

"Not at all; the second," said the girl. "And you, mother?"

"Oh, on the whole I'm for the brittle marriage as against the lax, the American way against the European. But most of all I am for tolerance in sex relations and for respecting privacy. Why not all kinds of relations for all kinds of persons? Just as there are now, but with respect or tolerance for the individual and without hypocrisy."

[1] "Changes in Sex-Relations," in *Our Changing Morality*, pp. 37-8.

"Even if we did not agree," the cleric said later to the feminist, "we could talk about it as twenty years ago we could not. So much to the good."

"So much to the bad," said the girl's father, still later; "better for all of us the old reserve."

Similar conditions are said to prevail in England. Dr. H. Somerville, writing in *The Month*, of September, 1927, after recalling that "not long ago even doctors thought birth control a nasty subject for discussion," declares that "now it forms the theme of instructions to girl guides, and as was stated by a leader of the Girl Guide Movement in Birmingham, girls of fourteen write for pamphlets about it in answer to newspaper advertisements."[2] It may seem to some ultra-conservative people, if any remain, that though no one else follows the advice of St. Paul about reticence concerning shameful things the Church should do so. But we must not press the Pauline injunction too far. St. Paul himself on occasion spoke out, very plainly, about "unmentionable" things. The Church is the watchman set upon the towers of the world. The awful words of God ring in her ears: "When I say to the wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning . . . the wicked shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand."[3] The Church has an obligation to universal society as well as to the individual soul. She dare not pretend ignorance. She could not be exculpated of cowardice or of negligence if she were to adopt an ostrich-like attitude. Woe is her if she preach not the Gospel even to a recalcitrant world.

The Church however refuses to consider birth control as a "problem." It is no problem. A plain violation of nature cannot be a problem. It is a vice and a crime. If birth control were preached only for invalid women, or for imbecile or immoral parents; if it were advocated

[2] "The Devil of Malthus," p. 202.
[3] Ezek. iii, 18.

only to check the spread of what are called euphemistically "social diseases," there might perhaps be a "problem." Even so, that problem could be solved readily enough. The cure is at hand, a severe and radical cure, no doubt, but not too severe for a hideous disease. The cure is partial or total abstinence from sexual commerce. But the birth-control propagandists will have none of that. They advocate not the regulation but the frustration of nature. They favor a course of action that is repugnant even to the natural man. To the unperverted mind, whether of a savage or a civilized man, onanism is nasty. Even Bernard Shaw, not too squeamish about ordinary sins, considers the use of contraceptive practices as "reciprocal masturbation." Only after breaking down barriers of natural decency can man and woman bring themselves to play such a trick on nature.

Dr. Cooper, of the Catholic University of America, who has written a conspicuously excellent treatise on this delicate subject, says, with moderation but with conviction: "Among peoples on the higher civilized levels of material culture, individuals or groups may reason themselves into an ethical defense of such methods, and may acquire a certain relative callousness, practicing them, but even they do not always succeed in entirely quenching the disgust and repugnance that the personal use of contraceptive measures commonly arouses in refined and high-principled natures."[4]

But the overzealous apostles of birth control will not leave men and women to their conscience. They are determined to submit the race to a process of "education," for the purpose of destroying the innate human repugnance to what is unnaturally vile. If ever the maxim *corruptio optimi pessima* were applicable, it is in this matter. Man, "a little lower than the angels," makes

[4] *Birth Control*, by John M. Cooper, Ph.D. (Washington, D. C., National Catholic Welfare Conference).

himself lower than the beasts. The phenomenon, in fine, is proof positive of moral degeneracy. The cure is in leading the race back to nature, and, even more, back to the supernatural.

I say there is no problem. As for imbeciles, paranoiacs and others who may be hopelessly insane, there can be no harm in recommending or enforcing continence. Incorrigible criminals may be permanently isolated. Syphilitics and others suffering from venereal diseases may be advised to discontinue sexual intercourse until cured.

Apart from these pathological cases, it ought not to be difficult, in a Christian civilization, to persuade people to observe a primary law of nature. The Catholic Church, for her part, is never afraid to recommend, and even to demand, when necessary, actual austerity. She cannot understand why those who profess the gospel of the cross should balk at self-sacrifice. Every individual who battles his way to heaven must, sooner or later, once or many times, show the spirit of a soldier and a hero. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."

The Church that without hesitation permits millions of men and women to vow themselves to absolute continence, celibacy, is not afraid to demand chastity in the conjugal life, even under most difficult circumstances. She has means of knowing that a great number of married persons observe continence of necessity. Indeed all practicing physicians know of honorable men who, for the sake of an invalid wife, refrain from demanding their conjugal rights, for long periods of years, or even permanently. No one dare say that such things are impossible. We have all heard of the anti-Catholic controversialist who, after declaiming against celibacy as a natural impossibility, was compelled,—unfortunately for his logic or for his reputation,—to absent himself from his home and family for a year or more. In fine, since the days

of that lusty Rabelaisian, Martin Luther, there has been too much gabble about the impossibility of self-restraint. "If you go to a Catholic priest," says G. B. Shaw, "and tell him that a life of sexual abstinence means a life of utter misery, he laughs, and obviously, for a very good reason." Therefore, the solution of the "problem" is not impossible, at least to Christians and other honorable persons not afraid of a bit of austerity.

One might conceivably let that statement suffice as an adequate pronouncement on birth control. But the Malthusians and neo-Malthusians invariably intrude a great many subsidiary considerations, in the effort to persuade the race that birth control is a necessity for human welfare. It may be advisable to consider, briefly, some of these arguments.

First, there is much juggling with figures to show that the natural and normal increase of the human race must be halted, or the globe will become overcrowded. In spite of the fact that the gloomy predictions of Malthus have turned out to be false, the familiar fallacy is constantly reiterated. It was put graphically by Professor J. W. Gregory at the meeting of the British Association in 1924. He says: "From 1906 to 1910, to quote the latter half of the last normal decade, the population of the world grew at the rate of doubling in sixty years. If this rate were to be maintained, the 6,600 millions of people which it has been calculated is the most that the world can feed, would be in existence in 120 years, and even if the food supply were indefinitely multiplied—standing room on the earth, exclusive of the remoter Arctic and Antarctic lands, would all be filled when the population numbered 700 billion (*i.e.* million million) in the year 3000."[5]

[5] Quoted by Dr. Somerville, in *The Month* (London), September, 1927.

The professor, it seems, spoke in jest. As Dr. Somerville remarks, "He would have been equally entertaining and instructive if he had favored his audience with a calculation of what the population of the world must have been five thousand years ago on the assumption that the population is halved every sixty years, counting backwards."

Dr. Somerville calls these calculations "arithmetical exercises in hypothetics." It reminds one of the old-fashioned pastime of reckoning how many grains of wheat would be upon a checkerboard if we put a single grain on the first square, two grains on the second, three on the third, and so on. No ordinary human being could, or would, work out the problem, but the arithmeticians tell us that when the process is completed there would be wheat enough to fill 156 thousand (or is it 156 million) miles of box cars? But, of course, something always happens to prevent the filling of that checkerboard. To begin with, the experimenter would run out of wheat. Likewise something always happens to prevent the crowding of the earth. We run out of human beings.

The birth-control statisticians, however, are not so much worried about standing room as about food supply. Here again their alarm is premature. To use a familiar expression, "We have only scratched the surface of the earth" thus far in our quest for food. In the United States, for example, not more than five-eighths of the possible arable land has been cultivated. By utilizing that land, and adopting a more intensive system of cultivation, this country alone could support more than 250 millions of people, perhaps 300 millions. With an inevitable—and desirable—decrease in the use of meat, we could add another 50 or 100 millions to that. By building dams and irrigating the Great American Desert, we could place and feed still more millions. In spite of our boasted

Yankee efficiency we follow, as J. R. Smith says,[6] "a system of food distribution that should have been left behind when Noah went into the Ark." We read in the newspapers again and again that growers of apples, in the Catskills, only seventy-five or one hundred miles from New York City, invite anyone to come and help himself; "Bring your own barrels," runs the advertisement. Even at that, tons of the fruit are left to rot on the trees or on the ground. In Maine, trainloads of potatoes have been dumped on the railroad track or fed to the hogs. When it doesn't pay to pick apples off the trees, even though there be eight pairs of rails and a magnificent water course leading from the orchards to a city of six million people, only a hundred miles away, and when potatoes enough to feed an entire State are thrown away, surely our methods of distribution of food are antediluvian.

Outside the United States, there are even greater areas that have remained untouched, or inadequately cultivated. Dr. Santiago O'Farrell, chairman of the local board of the Buenos Aires and Pacific Railroad, in 1915, at a dinner of the Chamber of Commerce in Buenos Aires, complained that "the Argentine is an immense banquet table laden with products and fruits of the soil, and there is no one to eat of it." The Argentine has a population of 9 millions. It could support 200 millions.

To give but one more instance: "Although there is in Siberia a vast expanse of undeveloped arable land, probably as great in amount as the total arable land in the United States, both improved and unimproved; and although there are considerable areas of fertile land as yet undeveloped in Argentina, Australia, and other countries of temperate climate, nevertheless the great reservoir of unutilized agricultural resources is to be found in the

[6] *The World's Food Resources*, New York, 1919, quoted by Dr. Cooper.

tropics. Tropical and sub-tropical countries include approximately half of the arable land, present and potential, of the world. Of the arable land in these countries, less than one-fourth . . . is in cultivation at present, and possibly one-eighth is used for pasture. . . . Apparently the tropics and sub-tropics include about three times as large an area of potentially arable land as that which remains undeveloped in the temperate zones."[7]

A few years ago a plan was formed to establish a school for tropical sanitation in honor of Colonel Gorgas, who made the Panama Canal Zone a "health resort," as President Roosevelt used to say. The movement is under way, but probably the tropics will not be utilized until we need them. But if the birth-control zealots are itching to help the race, why not take up the task of developing the tropics as a dwelling-place and a source of food supply. There is enough potential fruit in the torrid zone to feed half a dozen worlds the size of this.

But led by some perverse spirit (can it be a diabolic spirit?) they scorn simple and obvious remedies for the overpopulation they pretend to fear, and they aim to persuade the race to commit suicide. Mr. Chesterton in his usual wisely nonsensical way speaks of the problem arising when there are only four hats for eight boys. "Get four more hats," says common sense. "Not at all," say the advocates of birth control, "cut off four heads!"

Or take the problem of poverty. This too is a *bête noire* of the birth-control agitators. "The poor you have always with you," said our Savior. And He might have added, "Because the rich you have always with you." There is now, and always, much discussion,—much wasted discussion,—about the causes of poverty. The

[7] O. E. Baker and H. M. Strong, *Arable Land in the United States*, printed separate from the *Yearbook of the Department of Agriculture of 1918* (Washington, 1919), quoted in Cooper, p. 38.

chief cause looms so large that no one seems to see it. The reason for poverty is wealth. Sutherland puts the case graphically. Suppose a hundred acres of land are divided among ten families, each being allotted ten acres. All goes well until one family, by hook or by crook, gets possession of eight other farms besides the one allotted to it. Then one family has ninety acres and nine families have to divide ten acres. The history of wealth and poverty is in that little parable. Even in the United States, 2 per cent of the people own 60 per cent of the wealth. And yet economists pretend to be puzzled by the "problem" of poverty. As if selfishness, and chicanery, and dishonesty, and injustice were a *problem!* There are, no doubt, contributory and aggravating causes of poverty, but if the main cause, too great concentration of wealth, were removed, poverty would be inconsiderable. So again, if the birth-control agitators really intend to be philanthropic, why not attack the weak spots, and the wicked spots, in the capitalistic system? But no! With preternatural obstinacy, they persist in employing a crazy kind of logic to get away from facts. Witness the characteristic utterance of an American woman, Annie G. Porritt, who, exulting over the fifth International Birth Control Conference in London, cries out that the New Malthusians are "scoring a victory over forces of nature which unchecked have brought upon mankind miseries of unemployment, destitution, famine and war."[8]

It would be wiser to speak softly about scoring victories over Nature. Nature is a jealous mother and has a way of punishing rebellious children. And Nature is not always gentle. She can be ruthless. It would mean nothing to Nature to blot out the whole tribe of birth controllers and start the race anew with people who will keep her laws. Indeed, Nature is now again for the hundredth time (perhaps if we knew the whole truth, for the

[8] In *The Nation*, August 30, 1923.

thousandth time) taking just that kind of vengeance on those who think to outwit her.

The birth-control advocates, though they claim to be zealous for the welfare of all classes, profess a special devotion to the interest of the poor. But the poor are less proficient in the new "education" than the rich. Most poor people will have nothing to do with race suicide, while the well-to-do classes are swiftly killing themselves off. The London *Lancet* of May 14, 1921, presented figures to show that, in the poorer quarters of Paris, the birth rate was 104 for every thousand marriages, while in the quarters of the rich, it was only 34. If Paris be a fair criterion of the great cities of the world, and doubtless it is, the poor are propagating three times as fast as the well-to-do.

Again, the hope of the neo-Malthusians, at least in English-speaking countries, is to restrain the non-"Nordics," and so give the "Nordics" a chance to hold their own. But (speaking again in general terms) the Latins, the Celts, and the Slavs remain prolific, while the "Nordics" are increasing only in sterility.

Yet again, frightened by "the rising tide of color," the misguided "philanthropists" hope, though one can scarcely see how, to moderate the increase of the black man, the brown, and the yellow. But the colored races seem almost entirely unaffected by the agitation. They continue relentlessly on their way toward numerical supremacy. It would be wiser tactics for the Malthusians to leave the whites to their own natural instincts, and carry on their propaganda in Africa, Japan, China, and Polynesia.

Finally (shall we venture the full truth?), there is, at least in some quarters of the world, a hope of halting the advance of the Church, by indoctrinating Catholics with the race-suicide villainy. Speaking for that small section of the globe which I know best, New England, it is evident that the enormous increase in numbers, and latterly

in influence, of the Irish and the French Canadians, has quite seriously shaken the supremacy of the original Puritans. The birth-control propaganda becomes therefore a factor in the rivalry of religions. I have heard two maiden ladies, evidently of Puritan origin, lamenting that "Boston is not what it used to be. It is in the hands of the Irish Catholics." True, Boston and Plymouth and Salem, Masachusettts, and all New England, is, or soon will be, in the hands of the Irish, French-Canadian, Italian, Portuguese,—Catholics all.

But the dwindling Puritans are slow to grasp the reason of their loss of control. They allege "immigration," and demand the tightening of the immigration laws. But immigration of non-Puritans is not the main cause of Puritan decline. The Anglo-Saxon race not only in New England but in all America is being punished for its vices. Putting this very plainly, it means that the descendants of the early settlers did not keep the first law of God and of nature. For proofs, consider these figures. In 1790, 83 per cent of the American people (that is 2,345,844 out of a total of 2,810,248) were of English origin. If those two millions and more had increased naturally, they would be more than a hundred millions today. Why did they not increase normally? Why did not the "Anglo-Saxons" develop naturally? If they had done so, they would not now be whining and threatening.

The Puritans were in New England two hundred years before the Irish, and two hundred and fifty years before the French Canadians. Yet the Puritans are being crowded out. But if they had not flouted the Biblical injunction, "Increase and multiply," the Irish and the French could not have crowded in. The Yankees, to use a sporting phrase, "had the jump" on the "aliens." But they threw away their advantage, and now some of them are going so far as to suggest violent measures to restore it.

A certain defender of Anglo-Saxon supremacy (curiously named Gino Speranza) was allowed in one of our most conservative magazines, *The World's Work*, to say: "The historic American majority, forced into an awareness that the very fundamentals of its life and culture are threatened, begins to react. It wishes to hold its own normally and by due process of law, if it can. But hold its own it will; and it will do so violently and extra-legally if it must. The American majority is stiffening its will to meet the challenge of the other races and other cultures for supremacy. Its mood is still conciliatory, but it is tending to become grim. It will, if other means of defense fail, become violent."[9]

This is indeed a rather wild doctrine to be preached in a publication bearing the respected name of Doubleday Page. But let us face the broad fact. If the Anglo-Saxon race, with a start of two or three hundred years over all other races in America, cannot hold its own except by violence, it is doomed. It cannot be saved by violence. If its case is as desperate as Mr. Speranza imagines, it must be inherently weak. If it is weak, it will go to the wall. Artificial regulations and extra-legal methods will not save a civilization that cannot save itself. Violence will not do, and birth control does not "take" among Catholic peoples. The only possible way for the Puritans to hold on is to learn again to reproduce. The birth-control fanatics are doing the Puritans no good.

Finally, the "upper classes" are in danger of extinction, if birth control continues. Those who have made careful computation inform us that if any people, or any community within a people, is to hold its own, not to say increase numerically, each family must have, on the average, somewhere between three and four children.

But no such average is maintained amongst the well-to-do and educated classes. Professor Henry Fairfield

[9] November, 1923.

Osborn, President of the Trustees of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, talking to the National Immigration Conference in New York City on December 13, 1923, said: "In cold-blooded scientific language, our best stock is threatened with extinction. In certain parts of this country,—not in all, thank God,—the original stocks are becoming extinct. That is a lesson we learn from the dinosaur, that when it takes a wrong tendency, a stock dies out." (Will the reader permit me to pause to remark on the unconscious humor of scientists? Imagine going all the way back to the dinosaur, extinct some millions of years ago, to prove that if a race violates the law of nature it will die out!) He continues: "You have an illuminating example of this in two of our greatest universities—Harvard and Yale. Statistics show that if Harvard and Yale had to depend upon the sons of graduates, they would eventually be empty. The reason is that these classes are not maintaining normal reproductiveness." Another witness to the same fact (the sum total of evidence is overwhelming) is that of a writer in *Scribner's Magazine* for August, 1922, who gave the information that "over a decade ago it appeared from class reports that Vassar graduates had on the average only one child." Statistics reported in August, 1921, from Harvard, Yale, Smith, and Barnard (two colleges for men and two for women) give approximately the same results. "If the Harvard of the future were limited to the sons of Harvard men, it would sink in half a dozen generations from 5,000 to 250." The writer of the article comments ruefully, "The one great safeguard for Democracy, namely education, devours its children like Cronus of old, diminishing them almost by a half with each generation."

Undoubtedly this is a drawback to civilization. The "old families," after accumulating culture for a few generations, or a few centuries, deliberately eliminate themselves,

and their place is taken by the uneducated and uncultured, —perhaps even by the uncivilized. This tragic history is repeated in whole nations as well as in families. The barbarian Goths and Huns succeed to the highly cultured Greeks and Romans. The process of building a civilization recommenced, continued for some centuries, and then the ex-barbarians killed themselves off; other barbarians stepped into their places, and the wheel revolved once more.

We have seen that the birth-control propaganda defeats its own purposes. And we have permitted ourselves to express the opinion that, at least in some places, one of those purposes is to prevent the natural increase of Catholics. But the Church is in a way to gain by whatever success the neo-Malthusians achieve. For, even on the testimony of so ardent an advocate of the movement as Dr. Drysdale, "all organized opposition to birth control is dead except that of the Roman Catholic Church." That statement perhaps is not absolutely accurate, but the fact is that the Church is by all odds the strongest opponent of birth control. The results, naturally, are in her favor. In England and Wales, for example, the Catholic birth rate is 38.6 per thousand, while the birth rate of the general population is only 24 per thousand. Obviously, then, the birth rate among non-Catholics alone is much less than 24. The Catholics, therefore, in England and Wales are increasing perhaps twice as fast as Non-Catholics.[10] Even in France, a country in which birth control has wrought havoc, "Roman Catholicism is considerably more prolific (when the belief of the people is at all deep) than English Protestantism." Dr. Meyrick Booth, from whom this statement is quoted, in his turn quotes M. Leroy Beaulieu, who says "the Catholic Church tends," not only by discouraging birth control, but "by

[10] On the figures of Professor Meyrick Booth, "Religious Belief as Affecting the Growth of Population," *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1914.

means of its whole atmosphere, to promote a general increase of population, for, more than other types of Christianity, it condemns egoism, materialism and inordinate ambition."

It would seem, therefore, that the future as well as the past belongs to the Church. The Church could conceivably sit still and wait. She can afford to wait, for she is everlasting. But she does not sit still. She fights aggressively against artificial birth control, not because she fears the loss of her own dominion, but because she is anxious for the salvation of all society. If the Church were, as her enemies declare, concerned only to dominate the world, she might employ Machiavellian tactics, maintain a discreet silence, and watch her enemies obliterate themselves from the field. But, paradoxically, she is engaged in a hard battle to save her enemies. And she has few, if any, organized and well-trained reinforcements. She looks for some one to fight at her side, and she finds none, none at least who will go wholeheartedly into the battle and fight *à outrance* against the twin enemies of civilization, divorce and race suicide. Frequently, we Catholics claim that the Church is the Savior of Society. She vindicates her claim by maintaining this struggle, if in no other way.

It would be untrue, however, to insinuate that in this matter the Church is not in any degree fighting for her own life. The vicious and unnatural practice of birth control has been the reason of some of her great losses. Not infrequently, those who allege intellectual difficulties as reasons for abandoning the Catholic faith, have, in truth, left the Church because they found the Catholic moral code too severe. Here again, the rather silly accusation that the Church desires, above all things else, to maintain control of her hundreds of millions of adherents, is proven false. If she were to compromise on the questions of divorce and race suicide, she could retain within her

ranks a great number whom she has been compelled to excommunicate. Those whom she has allowed to go, or whom she has driven out, have been, for the greater part, the well-to-do and those who are socially superior, for these are they who most frequently seek divorce, and who more usually practice birth control. In return for her loyalty to principle, and her insistence upon the observance of the laws of Nature, her motives are misrepresented. For example, witness the following statement of the Neo-Malthusian League, quoted by Sutherland. He dubs it quite justly as "very mean, very spiteful, very imbecile": "Take the Clergy. They are officers of a Church that has made marriage a source of revenue, and of social control; they preach from a sacred book that bids the chosen people 'multiply and replenish the earth'; they know that large families tend to preserve clerical influence and authority." Every phrase in that indictment is demonstrably illogical. If marriage is a source of revenue, then more marriages would bring more revenue. If the Church would allow divorce and remarriage, she could increase her revenue three or four fold. Besides the fee for marriage, she could charge a fee for divorce. Furthermore, how can it profit the finances of the Church to alienate those wealthy persons who seek divorce, and who practice birth control? If the Church were mercenary, she could "wink the other eye." But to the amazement and the discomfiture of those who suspect her of seeking only wealth and worldly power, she is relentless and to the last degree rigorous in upholding the law of God.

THE FAMILY: THE ORIGINAL AND ULTIMATE SOCIAL FORM

CHAPTER VI

THE FAMILY: THE ORIGINAL AND ULTIMATE SOCIAL FORM

NOWADAYS everything "in the heavens above, the earth beneath and in the waters under the earth" is explained by evolution. We hear incessantly not only of the evolution of species, plants, animals, and men, but of society, of government, of religion, of dogma, of all things human and divine. We could hardly expect, therefore, to escape the theory of the evolution of the family. To anyone not quite obsessed with the hypothesis of evolution it would seem that the family needed no evolution, that it must have come into being, essentially as it is now, when the first man met the first woman and begot the first child. The father-mother-child group is, of necessity, aboriginal. All other forms of society may be, to a degree, artificial, but the family is a purely natural organism. Even the clan, the next social form after the family, is not essential to human life. Man is, indeed, a gregarious animal: he tends by nature to foregather with his fellows, not only for warfare, or defense against war, but sheerly for the *solatium humanitatis*. Hence the clan. But the clan could be dispensed with, and the race continue. The family, however, is first and last and always indispensable. Man could live with only his wife and children. As a matter of course, he must have done so, before there were men and women enough to form a tribe. In time and in nature the family comes first. And yet, a very well-informed, and in general, very wise sociologist,

Francis G. Peabody,[1] can say: "Here is a social group [the family] which, in its present form, is by no means an original and outright gift to the human race, but is the product of a vast world process of social evolution. . . . The family, it appears, which is to be the unit of further civilization, has emerged into its present form through various experimental types, assuming all possible variations of groupings, until the fittest to survive had been attained."

It will be well, perhaps, not to stop and argue over the ethnological and historical accuracy of those statements. Indeed, much, if not all, of the evidence is prehistoric, and consequently a matter for conjecture. But one fact is beyond controversy: the absolutely primitive human family was monogamous. If, soon or late, monogamy yielded to polygyny; or if the two forms existed side by side; and if both monogamy and polygyny among some degenerate tribes gave way to promiscuity; these hypotheses are legitimate matter for scientific investigation, but the one fact upon which evolutionists and non-evolutionists can agree is that "the fittest form to survive has been attained."

But now, ostensibly in the interest of a higher civilization, radical agitators are urging a return to one or other of the family forms that have been tried and found wanting. Perhaps they deceive themselves into thinking that they have discovered an entirely new form, hitherto unheard of. And the more excitable advocates of conservatism play into the hands of the radicals by exclaiming that never in all the history of the human race was there such a condition of the family as that which prevails today. But, of course, such conditions, or their equivalent, have prevailed again and again. The phenomenon that

[1] Formerly Professor of Christian Morals at Harvard University, in *Jesus Christ and the Social Question* (N. Y., Macmillan, 1900), pp. 134, 137.

worries us today is not indeed promiscuity, which, if it ever was widely prevalent, was soon abandoned as impossible; not polygamy, which has, wherever practiced, retarded social and moral development; but "successive polygamy," a system by which a man takes a mate temporarily, secures a divorce, virtually at will, marries again and divorces again, and so on *ad infinitum*. This scheme is an interesting, not to say a devastating phenomenon, but it is no novelty. And certainly it is no *evolution*. The same sort of thing was in vogue in the degenerate days of Greco-Roman civilization. It was, perhaps in an equal degree, tolerated among the Jews from the days of Moses. But in all places where it was tried it was recognized as a degradation and was abandoned. To go back to it now would certainly not be progress.

As of marriage, so of the family. If, as Dr. Peabody says, the strictly monogamic family is a product of a vast world process of social evolution, and every rival form was cast off and left behind in the march of humanity toward better conditions, why should we go back now and resume any one of the discarded forms? Should the frog revert to a tadpole, or *homo sapiens* to *pithecanthropos?*

When we maintain, in all sincerity, that the most "advanced" thinkers are, in truth, reactionaries, we are supposed to be playing with a paradox. But we are simply stating a scientific fact. Mr. Chesterton has somewhere said: "They tell us that we cannot turn back the hands of the clock. To which the obvious answer is that we *can*." I should have liked the retort better if he had said not "*we* can," but "*you* do!" We have no desire to go back to a half-evolved social condition, such as polygamy, either simultaneous or successive. We are content to let the dead past bury its dead mistakes. The race has achieved monogamous marriage. The highest product of civilization is the family, one man, one wife, one group

of children. Let us hold to that achievement as a dearly won product of social evolution, if for no other reason.

But there is another reason, at least for Christians. The monogamic family is sealed with the approval of Jesus Christ. Not that He *created* the family, as if it had never been before. He took its highest and best form and consecrated it. "He changed the family, which till then had been only of civil importance, into a religious institution." [2] James Strahan, who quotes that sentence, adds, "rather He discovered its Divine Principle, which is inherently and eternally religious." In a sense the amendment is justified. Even the Son of God could not have made marriage a sacrament and the family a religious institution, if there were nothing inherently divine in the one and the other. Catholic theologians are fond of referring to the family as a symbol of the Holy Trinity. It is not a sacrilege, therefore, to imagine a similarity between the relationship of the Persons in the Trinity and that of father, mother, and child. Here again we are in the presence of mysticism. It runs all through the life of Christians. And here again, perhaps, we must expect the ridicule of those to whom nothing is mystical. Irreligious persons laugh at simple Catholic women who pray to God, or to the saints *pro felici partu,* as if there were something incongruous in associating the idea of God with the idea of childbirth. But there is no superstition in the practice, and no cause for ridicule. The Church has a prayer in her ritual for that precise purpose. And why not? God is life. Human life is a participation of the Divine Life. An expectant mother may ask the Source of Life to make use of her body to communicate another life to the world. When the babe is born, the mother may take it in her arms and offer it to God, with the

[2] Schmidt, *The Social Results of Christianity* (Eng. tr., London, 1885), p. 203, quoted in Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* art. "Family, Biblical and Christian."

self-same gesture, and with much the same sentiment in her heart, as the priest who elevates the Sacred Host in the Mass at the moment after Consecration. There is perhaps no other offering that a human being can make that is so nearly worthy of God. And there can be no incongruity in the association of religion and childbirth, except in the minds of those who consider man only a "placental mammal" and not the child of God.

Even the pagans have had some faint vaticinations of the Christian doctrine of the religious character of the family. In ancient Rome, as in the Oriental patriarchate, the father of the family was king and priest, and the family was a religious society. The home was a temple. The hearthstone was an altar, the shrine of the *Lares* and *Penates*. The city (which was to the Romans as the world) was looked upon as only an enlarged household, and religious service in the public temples as only an extension of the pious prayers and sacrifices that were offered in the home. The center of religion, as of patriotism, was the family. It would not be a preposterous conjecture that herein is the secret of the rise of Rome,—the strength that came to the state from the harmonious combination of domestic, political, and religious life; and that, on the other hand, the decline of Rome was due to the breaking of that combination.

Be that as it may, Christian civilization, if not pagan, is built upon the divine idea of the sanctity of the family. Christ lived in the bosom of His family. He was no recluse,—no hermit, no anchorite. All of His life except the last three years was lived in the intimacy of the domestic circle. The Christian people have never forgotten that fact. It has been commemorated in paintings, in sermons, in hymns, and in mystical theology. The Holy family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, has been the inspiration of family life. The Holy House is the symbol of this sentiment, and the faithful are persuaded that even

the material building in which Jesus lived the family life has been miraculously preserved. In imitation of that Sacred Home, Christians have tried to make their own homes centers not only of social activity but of religion.

Perhaps that fact is the key to the extravagant and otherwise incomprehensible zeal of the radicals in their attack upon the home. They have seen that if they can disrupt the family, they can ruin religion. Why they should wish to ruin religion is their own secret. But they are going about it with diabolical shrewdness. In this we must commend them, as the lord commended the unjust steward, "for as much as he had done wisely," however wicked may have been his motive. They who attack the Church, or the clergy, will have only a temporary victory. But they who attack the home will, if they succeed, bring irreparable ruin upon Christianity. The Christian religion simply cannot survive if society goes back to polygamy, either open and avowed polygamy as among the Moslems, or virtual polygamy as practiced in a society which tolerates divorce.

Certain other Christian institutions can conceivably be dispensed with,—monasticism, for example, which early and late has played an enormous part in the development of our Western civilization. The monks may be disbanded, and the monasteries dismantled. There is a hint of this in the apocryphal prophecy of *religio depopulata.* But that would not bring about the end of the Christian religion. Celibacy of the clergy, also, may conceivably be abrogated. It is, after all, a matter of discipline and not of dogma. And still Christianity would survive. But if the home and the family are tampered with and essentially modified, religion will die. I say "religion," and not merely the Christian religion. We have seen that even paganism could not survive the deterioration and demoralization of the home. Neither can Judaism. As for Mohammedanism, it might "carry on," in the same

moribund way that it has existed for the last thirteen centuries. But even Mohammedanism has some fairly stringent regulations about the home and the family. If the chaotic conditions which the radicals seem to desire ever widely prevail, *all* religions of any sort will perish. Of course, art and culture and all civilization will perish likewise, but what does that matter to those who protest that the only rule for human mating shall be "free impulse," and that "the regulation of love by institutions is one of the major evils of the world," and that whoever thinks an adulterer is necessarily wicked is "adding his stone to the prison constructed by priests in black gowns"?

But some of the "advanced" agitators tell us that they do not wish to abolish the home. They have a plan for another kind of home. H. G. Wells, years ago when he was a Fabian Socialist, declared "Socialism in fact is the state family. The old family of the private individual must vanish before it, just as the old water works of private enterprise, or the old gas company." [3] In the very next sentence after that startling pronouncement, he speaks of "triumphant egotism," but as an example of how far triumphant egotism can carry a man, one might select Wells' *ipse dixit* that the private family must perish. He explains modestly that "the Socialist does not propose to destroy something that conceivably would otherwise last for ever, when he proposes a new set of institutions, and a new system of conduct to replace the old proprietary family. He no more regards the institution of marriage as a permanent thing than he regards a state of competitive industrialism as a permanent thing." [4] Wells in this treatise, as usual, is dogmatizing and prophesying rather than demonstrating, so it does not come within his purpose to explain how private marriage (or as he alternately

[3] *Socialism and the Family* (Ball Publishing Co., 1908), pp. 31, 32.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

calls it, proprietary marriage) has continued to exist amidst so many changes in customs, and even in spite of the upheavals of whole civilizations. The private family existed before the privately owned gas company and waterworks, and after them. It was before the capitalistic system, it remains under capitalism, and can doubtless survive if capitalism goes under. Indeed, one must have a vast store of "triumphant egotism" to be able to visualize the passing of the family.

Eighteen years after his first prophecy, in spite of prodigious changes produced by the World War and its aftermath, Wells is still compelled to look into the future, to see the end, not of marriage itself, but even of the ritualistic trappings of marriage. "The time may come," he says, "when the ministrations of the clergyman, the orange blossoms and the robe of white, the voice that breathed o'er Eden, the hired carriages and the white favors will be quaint social survivals of backward suburban towns." I fear that Wells, in spite of his constant assumption of omniscience, little knows the tenacity of human nature in holding to old social customs and ritualistic observances. The Catholic Church, with all her power over her people, has not yet succeeded, after nearly two thousand years, in spite of continuous effort and peremptory commands, in putting a stop to the ancient custom of throwing old boots and rice at weddings! But even if the rice and the boots and the orange blossoms, and "O Promise Me," shall, in some remote unimaginable future, be no more, it may still be that the aboriginal institution of private marriage will continue.[5] James

[5] When one quotes Wells, it is almost always necessary to explain that he has a habit of contradicting himself, or at least of seeming to do so. He says, *e.g.*, in *First and Last Things*, p. 271, "I believe in the general social desirability of the family group." The catch is in the word "general." He says, "monogamy in general seems to me to be clearly indicated (as doctors say) . . . because first, there are not enough women to make polygamy feasible, and second, because for

Strahan who seems to be a far more discerning prophet than Wells, after rehearsing the fact that "many anti-Christian attacks are being directed against the domestic group," says reassuringly, "but it is clear that monogamy has long been growing innate in civilized man and this relationship is, as Herbert Spencer said, 'manifestly the ultimate form.' The Christian family is the germ of the yet higher civilization of the future."

However, if the family is to develop further in its evolution it must, as Cardinal Newman says, apropos of the Development of Doctrine, "preserve its type." Unless the evolution of marriage follows that rule, marriage will no longer be marriage, but something else, as (to borrow the Cardinal's apt illustration) the Roman Republic lost its identity when it became the Roman Empire, even though elaborate efforts were made to persuade the citizens that their old form of government remained. If marriage evolves away from its type, we shall be compelled to say to many women what our Savior said to the Samaritan at the well, "Thou sayest truly, thou hast no husband. For thou hast had five husbands and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband."

The *raison d'être* of the family is the training, intellectual, moral and religious, of the children. That obligation rests first and last upon the parents. It must not be alienated, even under the pretext of delegation. Doubt-

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the great majority of people any sort of household but a monogamous one conjures up painful and unpleasant visions." But his point is that "there are exceptional people sometimes, capable of—to coin a phrase—triangular mutuality [a union of one man and two women], and I do not see why we should either forbid or treat with bitterness or hostility such a grouping." Speaking of contradictions, in 1908 he said, "It is ridiculous to say, as some do, that sexual relations between two people affect no one but themselves until a child is born" (*First and Last Things*, p. 271). But in 1926 he himself says, "The community only becomes concerned with sexual affairs when the public health is affected or a child is born" (*International Cosmopolitan Magazine*, July, 1926).

less parents may make use of deputies in the training of their children, but the responsibility rests always with the father and mother. The increasing tendency to delegate and sub-delegate parental duty bodes ill for the welfare of the family. In the United States, the public schools, and to an almost equal extent the parochial schools, are bearing more and more of the burden that belongs naturally to parents. The children receive from the city, or from the parish, free books, free stationery, free lunch, free transportation. At school they are put under the care of doctors and dentists, of nurses and "welfare workers." Their play is supervised by paid instructors. Even after school they may go to the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. for junior classes in swimming and other sports. There are associations of Boy Scouts and Campfire Girls. These and a score of other allurements, devised with the best intentions, by civic officials or private philanthropists, keep the children almost constantly away from home and accustom parents to bring up their family vicariously. So with deliberate fault on no one's part, the home as a social, educational, and religious center becomes rapidly less important. Even at church, parents and children are separated. There are Sunday Schools and children's Masses, from which parents are excluded. Societies and sodalities separate the boys from the girls, and the boys and girls from their parents, even at the altar rail. Doubtless, there are reasons of convenience, if not of necessity, for all this. But if the present trend goes to its logical conclusion, we shall come dangerously near to the ancient Spartan or the modern Russian idea, according to which children are the property of the State and the State may do what it wills with them, and parents have nothing to do but acquiesce and surrender their natural rights.

It requires no deep study of philosophy or of history to see that this modern tendency, however innocently originated, is vicious. It is a threat not only to the family

but to the State. Too great centralization, either of power or of responsibility, will crush any State. A State that tries to do everything itself is like a general who will not commit any authority to his officers. When the Roman people got to looking to the State to provide *panem et circenses,* and every other necessity and luxury, the doom of Rome was assured and could not be long delayed.

Russia is discovering that danger. Even though there is a subdivision of power in the Soviet Republic, none the less the State has attempted too much. Young people have been taught to look to the government as a guide in all things, rather than to the family. The result is confessed by Leon Trotsky who, in his book on *Problems of Life,* confesses ruefully: "The destructive period in family life is still far from ended. The process of disintegration goes on at full speed. At a conference of Moscow propagandists, some of the comrades spoke with great and justifiable anxiety of the facility with which old family ties are broken for the sake of new ones as frail as the old. In all such cases mothers and children are the victims. Who of us has not heard in private conversations complaints and lamentations about the demoralization of young Soviet workers, especially of those who belong to the Union of Communist Youths?" [6] Add to this the prodigious phenomenon of the "wild children" of Russia, and one may see that a state may "bite off more than it can chew."

An American lecturer, Mr. W. M. Newman, recently returned from an adventurous trip of ten thousand miles through the Soviet Republic, has written a graphic description of these children: "Not only Moscow but all the large cities throughout Russia are filled with hordes of wolflike boys and girls, living more like animals than human beings.

"The ragamuffins, most of them incorrigibles, are the

[6] Quoted from *The Literary Digest,* May 8, 1926.

abandoned children whose parents were killed in the early days of the revolution or starved to death in the famine a few years ago. Homeless, many of them mere tots, they wandered out into the unknown world, sleeping where night overtook them, in streets, alleys and open fields.

"Like alley cats, they sought food wherever it could be obtained. Without parental guidance, many of them being too young to work, they became human animals, young wolves preying upon the inhabitants of villages, towns and cities for sustenance. They stole where and when they could. They became skillful pickpockets and moral degenerates.

"Alarmed at their depredations, the Government took steps to care for them as best it could. Institutions were opened, and the children were given every opportunity to obtain food, clothing and shelter. And they were taught trades best suited to their mentality and physical strength.

"Many remained in the institutions, but many ran away. Soviet philosophy does not permit restraint [O precious irony! or is it innocence?] and these *enfants terribles* of Russia were allowed to roam the length and breadth of the country." [7]

No one will in justice blame the Soviet government entirely for this pitiable plight of its children. But the phenomenon may serve as a spectacular and tragic demonstration of the fact that wise governments will not be over-paternalistic. The lesson is lost entirely on such blind guides as H. G. Wells, who maintains that the Socialist State (in his mind the Ideal State) must be "the over-parent, the outer-parent," and that "people rear their children for the State." Here again is the theory that the passengers exist for the sake of the ship. But the logical conclusion is horrible. "The State will pay," says Wells, "for children born legitimately in the way it will sanction.

[7] *New York Times*, September 25, 1927.

A woman with healthy and successful children will draw a wage for each of them from the State. It will be her wage." Here we have reached the *ultima thule* of the theory that marriage and childbearing are an economic convenience and not a sacrament. G. B. Shaw arrives at the same ignoble conclusion, for he contemplates the time when "every woman bearing and rearing a valuable child will receive a handsome series of payments, thereby making motherhood a real profession as it ought to be," and summing up his recommendations at the end of a long treatise, he suggests that we "place the work of a wife and mother on the same footing as other work: that is, on the footing of labor worthy of its hire, and provide for unemployment in it exactly as for unemployment in ship building or any other recognized bread-winning trade." [8]

The marriage philosophy of H. G. Wells and G. B. Shaw, though they think it new and original, derives from Martin Luther and John Calvin. Marriage is like agriculture, architecture, and shoemaking, says Calvin; it is like food and clothes, says Luther; it is like shipbuilding or any other trade, says Shaw. And Wells agrees that a "wage" should be paid to mothers. Feminists who cry out for "economic independence" of wives and mothers insist that it is dishonorable, and even immoral, for a wife to accept money from her husband. Olive Schreiner goes so far as to group "kept wives" with "kept mistresses." But while it is shameful for a wife and mother to receive money from her husband, it is apparently quite honorable to accept a wage from the State. This is the *ne plus infra* of the secular idea of marriage.

If there be any slightest glimmer of a reason why the State should thus completely appropriate the duties of father and mother, it is in the common allegation that multitudes of parents, in these days, are unfit to bring up their own children. Here again Shaw claims to speak

[8] *Getting Married*, p. 204.

with authority. At least he speaks with assurance, and, as usual, without taking pains to moderate or qualify his accusations: "It is no use," he says, "talking of honor, virtue, purity, and wholesome, sweet, clean, English home lives. . . . The flat fact is that English home life today is neither honorable, virtuous, wholesome, sweet, clean, nor, in any creditable way, distinctively English. It is in many respects conspicuously the reverse." And so he thinks it just as well that children should be taken "away from their homes completely at an early age," and sent first to a public school and then to a university, even though he considers the public schools and the universities "in some respects quite abominably corrupt." Naturally, we make allowance for Shaw's *penchant* for the sweeping statement, but there is possibly more than a grain of truth in what he says. To whatever extent his words may be true in England, they are not altogether false if applied to conditions in America. The incapacity of parents to direct and discipline their children is a great scandal among us. Recognizing that incapacity, those who are really concerned about children think it well to keep them as much as possible away from parents. This is, curiously, one of the reasons alleged in favor of the institution of summer camps for boys and girls. If one ventures the obvious objection to these camps, that children who spend nine or ten months of the year at boarding school should at least live at home with their parents for the remainder of the time, the answer is that in a fairly large percentage of cases the children will fare better at camp than at home, for they will be in the care of those who have made a study of child discipline, and who have no hesitation about enforcing discipline.

But, to repeat: the tendency to surrender parental authority to the State, or the Church, or to any other institution outside the home, is a retrograde movement, against the normal progress of civilization. Of old,

monarchists, autocrats, tyrants (benevolent or malevolent) appropriated the rights of the people. Thence the theory arose that the people had no rights except those that the autocrats condescended to bestow. But when this impossible and immoral system had worked its way pretty near to destruction, the people re-demanded their original, God-given prerogatives. Under democracy they have received at least a moiety of their due. But now comes a new form of tyranny, the socialistic state which aims again to rob the individual of his rights. It begins shrewdly by taking away his responsibilities. For that reason, the people have permitted themselves to accept the change supinely. They were so glad to get rid of responsibility that they willingly let rights go with them. The outcome is sure to be bad. With an autocratic state and an apathetic people, the destruction of both the family and the State will be close at hand, "yea, at the very doors."

There is no remedy except in persuading the people to reassume what they never should have abandoned. Perhaps as an incentive to the re-creation of the home as a cultural and religious center, it will be necessary to break down the opinion that has been developing, that the raising of a family is a job that involves little or no use of the intelligence. One foolish feminist asks, "Why should a $5,000 a year woman be only a cow?" The obvious implication is that there is nothing more in raising a family than could be performed by a wet-nurse. Such a misapprehension of the vocation of a mother is scarcely worthy of a correction. It is an affectation of the extreme feminists to despise child-bearing and child-rearing. But in truth the rearing of a family is a fine art worthy of the best efforts of the most intelligent men and women.

A wife and mother who cares for her husband and rears his children is not only performing a higher duty to society than any feminist agitator; she is doing more than any actress, poet, author, or any other woman who boasts

a "career." When we hear of a tenth-rate actress, or a "movie queen" who refuses motherhood because she will not "sacrifice her career," we smile, perhaps a little acridly. The world will gain nothing, and the home will lose nothing, when the "career" of such as these has been completed. But even if there be exceptional cases where some great artist was lost to the world because she preferred to devote herself to home-making, the world's loss will turn out to be the world's gain. There is no song, no painting, no piece of sculpture so important as a human being, and they who give themselves, with intelligence and affection, to the training of a great soul need never regret having devoted their lives to that noble work.

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

It may be well to summarize in a few sentences the two chief ideas which have been emphasized in this little volume.

First: There is no hope for an improvement in the condition of marriage, the family, and the home except in a return to the conviction that marriage is a sacrament. "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Where there is no idealism, there can be no morality. Unless the people in general can be taught again to believe in God, and in the immanence of God in all human affairs, the present corruption will take its fatal course, and civilization will be distintegrated.

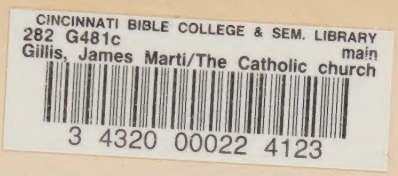
Second: The only true wisdom for statesmen is to recognize religion as the salvation of society. Even if, like Napoleon Bonaparte, they were to encourage religion as a pragmatic necessity, quite apart from its objective truth, this would be wiser than to ignore religion or reject it. It is futile to tinker with divorce laws; futile to appeal to patriotism as an argument against race suicide; futile to attempt the rehabilitation of family life by a mere plea for the welfare of society. "Unless God build the house, they labor in vain that build it."

The capital mistake of the age is the dissociation of religion from government. Not that we desire an "established religion" in every country. There is something more fundamental than that. What we advocate is that religion, established or unestablished, should

be a vital factor in all the conduct of the State. To illustrate: when the Peace Conference met at Versailles, it would have been well if selections from the Gospel had been read at the meetings, and if the treaty had been framed in accordance with the Sermon on the Mount. To the typical hard-headed "statesman" the suggestion smacks of fanaticism. That is the reason why the typical hard-headed statesman made such a horrible mess of the job of reconstructing a broken world. "Thou little knowest, my son," said shrewd old Oxenstiern, "with how little wisdom this world is governed."

As in the attempt to set the world right again after the horrible derangement caused by a universal war, so in the attempt to reconstruct domestic morality, there will be no success if religion is barred. Once again George Bernard Shaw shows his infallible genius for being wrong when he says, "We may, I think, dismiss from the field of practical politics the extreme sacerdotal view of marriage as a sacred and indissoluble covenant." Yes, you may, and you do dismiss it, and that is the reason why "practical politics" finds itself in such a hopeless muddle.

As for the Church, she looks on at this sad bungling of the "practical" politicians, not with any tendency to gloat over their blunders, but with a heavy heart. It cannot be to her advantage, or to the advantage of souls, that civilization should suffer. She ardently desires that all who accept Christ as the ultimate Law Giver should align themselves with her, in defense of His marriage and divorce legislation. She wishes that all who read the Gospels would share her conviction of the sacred and mystical nature of marriage. But if she cannot count upon the other organized Moral and Religious forces to join her in upholding the teaching of Christ, she will not falter in her adherence to His high ideals. In this event, with the coöperation only of her own children, she may still bring order out of chaos.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